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## NEW YORK NAT'S Crook Chase;

OR, DOWNING

### THE KING OF DIAMONDS.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE VAILED ANGEL.

"You are known as New York Nat, I believe?"

The one thus addressed started at the words, turned quickly and faced the speaker.

He had been standing upon a wooded point of land within the upper limits of the great city of New York, gazing out upon the beautiful Hudson River.

THAT SAME NIGHT A RAID WAS MADE BY THE POLICE AND DETECTIVES,  
GUIDED BY SHERMAN CANFIELD, NEW YORK NAT'S ALLY.



It was a scene of beauty before him, and behind him was a pretty cottage, with scattering homes here and there, for the march of enterprise had not reached yet that portion of the city.

The one who had been addressed as "New York Nat," was a youth of tall, graceful and athletic form, with a face that was handsome, fearless and strangely stamped with indomitable will and determination for one so young, as he was younger than he appeared, being several years yet from being of age.

He was neatly dressed, but in a *neglige* manner, wore a slouch hat, and had the appearance of being a youth in the ordinary walks of life.

When he faced the one who addressed him he saw a veiled woman in black, so deeply veiled in fact that he could not have told whether she was young or old, white or black.

A cloak of lightest texture concealed her form, so he could not tell anything about her, more than that her voice was low and musical.

"Yes, I am New York Nat, Olive," he answered with a smile.

"But I am not Olive."

"You cannot fool me, sis."

"I am not Olive," was the repeated response.

"What on earth are you doing in that disguise, sis? What game have you on hand now that I am not in it with you?"

"Again I tell you that I am not Olive."

The youth started, gazed fixedly into the veiled face and said in a low tone:

"Come, sis, don't fool any more, for you are Olive, as I can plainly tell."

"How?"

"By your height, general appearance and voice."

"I am not trying to fool you, and again I say that I am not the one you call Olive."

"Well, if you are not Olive you are—"

"Who?"

"One of the boys in disguise, a wolf in sheep's clothing," and the youth smiled.

"I am not a boy; I am not really in disguise; nor am I a wolf in sheep's clothing; and more, I am not your sister Olive."

"You know Olive?"

"As I know that you are New York Nat, I know Olive."

"Who and what is she?"

"Your sister, though known by no one to be such; and, she is more."

"What more?"

"Your ally in all you do."

"What does that mean?"

"She is known as the Masked Queen of the Boy Police League."

"Ha! you are Olive in spite of all, or one of the League."

"I am neither."

"You must be, for no one else would know what you do about Olive."

"I know also about you."

"What do you know?"

"I know that your comrades call you New York Nat, that you are a mysterious young fellow, hiding for some reason from the officers of the law, yet recently aiding them in ferreting out crime, though not daring to make yourself known; you are chief of the band of Unknown Boy Police."

"Do I not know you, New York Nat?"

New York Nat was evidently troubled at the words of the weird woman before him.

His face wore an anxious look, and he set his lips firmly together as he gazed upon the veil as though determined to pierce its mystery.

He had caught each tone of the voice, and felt convinced that it was either not Olive's, or if so, it was most splendidly disguised.

At last he said:

"Yes, you know me, and there is no one save Olive and one other, outside of my band who knows the secret you do."

"If you are Olive, you are most thor-

oughly disguised, but if you are not Olive, then you are—"

"What?"

"A veiled angel, for no one else could know my secret."

## CHAPTER II.

### WORKING IN THE DARK.

A LIGHT laugh came from beneath the veil at New York Nat's asseveration, and then followed:

"I have been called an angel before, and by the same lips that have since called me a devil."

There was a bitterness in the words and tone that New York Nat could not but notice, and he replied:

"I said that if you were not my sister Olive, you must be an angel to know my secret."

"Olive is an earthly angel, if there are such beings, and she could never do anything that would ever make me call her a devil; but I realize now that you are not Olive."

"I told you so."

"Nor one of my boys in disguise."

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes. I am now."

"Why now?"

"Well, not one of them could play your part, clever as some of them are."

"We then understand each other, Master Nat?"

"Oh, no; you seem to understand me, while I know nothing about you."

"Then for once the young chief of the Boy Police, the King of the Unknown Ferrets, is at fault, eh?"

"I am frequently at fault, miss."

"Why not call me madam?"

"You seem young to me, hardly more than a girl."

"Well, who I am and what I am must remain a mystery."

"You do not intend I shall know you, then?"

"I do not."

"Why do you come to me if that is your wish?"

"To have you serve me."

"How can I serve you when I do not know you?"

Again came a low, musical laugh, and then the words:

"You serve many so well, and yet none of them know you."

"To-day the chief of the Secret Service would give ten thousand dollars cash to know who you are; who it is that so mysteriously, so faithfully serves him, and yet, with his young allies, keeps so completely out of sight that he can glean no clue to you; he can only acknowledge the services you render him in an underhand way."

"Why do you not earn the reward by telling who I am, as you appear to know?"

"I can make money more readily and honorably than in betraying you, you who it is my wish should serve me."

"Ah! and in what way can I serve you?"

"You can serve me in several ways in detective work."

"Why not go to the Chief of the Secret Service and get his aid, and his legitimately commissioned detectives?"

"Because I prefer to come to you, New York Nat."

"Why so? I must know."

"In the first place, you can serve me better than the regular force, and then I will not have to unvail to you, or to confess certain things that must remain concealed."

"Ah! that is it?"

"Yes."

"And now tell me how it is that you know me."

"I will only say that clever as you are, keeping hidden from the Secret Service chief and his ferrets, not known to the po-

lice force, and wholly unknown to all, yet I, a woman, have unraveled your secret and know you just as you are, New York Nat, the chief of the band of youths who are pleased to call themselves the Boy Police League, who meet in an old mansion, known as Miser Max's Haunted House, who are banded together by the strongest ties, working by day in various callings, such as messenger-boys, hotel-boys, newsboys, boot-blacks, and in other ways being able to serve as spies and detectives, and having as your Mascot, or Queen, as you call her, your sister Olive, who dwells in yonder cottage, is the treasurer of your League and secretary as well, and goes masked to all meetings, while not a soul else knows her as she is, save yourself."

"Am I not right, New York Nat?"

"Anything else?" evasively and suspiciously.

"Yes, something else."

"What is it?"

"You have an ally."

"Ah! An ally? And pray, who is he?"

"A gentleman who came here from Arizona, whom you saved from death the night of his arrival, for he was to be put out of the way by those who plotted to remove him as a rightful heir to an estate."

"He is a young man, and was a rancher in Arizona and well to do."

"It was through your saving his life that he got his fortune, and he keeps your secret, and is your go-between to communicate with the Secret Service chief for you."

"He lives in grand style in a fashionable street, and alone, save his servants."

"You and your sister had a strange life, for you were parted as little children, you to become a wanderer, she a flower-girl, and later you met and you saved her from those who had killed her old guardian, Miser Max, in the very mansion you now occupy."

"To redeem your young comrades from an evil life, you and your sister organized them into the Boy Police League, and you have done such splendid service that I now seek you to have you serve me in a startling, strange and most mysterious and dangerous case, which I feel you will undertake and carry to a successful unravelling."

"Now say whether I know you or not?"

"I must confess that you do."

"You know it all, and, after all our struggle for secrecy, we are at your mercy."

"Yet I am merciful, and wish you to serve me, as I said, and in doing so you will serve yourself and your band as well."

"Yes, but I am not to know who you are?"

"You are not."

"Then I shall be working like a rat in a hole, wholly in the dark?"

"Yes, as far as I am concerned, but you will work though into light in the end, if you do not fear to take the case."

"Oh, no, I shall not back down," was the prompt reply.

## CHAPTER III.

### A FAIR ALLY.

"FROM what I have heard of you, New York Nat, you are not of the backing-down kind," said the veiled woman, gazing through her thick face-covering directly into the frank, fearless countenance of the young chief of the Boy Ferrets.

"May I ask how you heard of me?"

"By accident."

"From whom?"

"From no one."

"Yet you heard of me?"

"I cannot say even that."

"What then, miss?"

"I learned of you."

"From whom?"

"From no person."

"You speak like a puzzle, miss."



"Well, a puzzle I am, and must so remain to you.

"I shall keep your secret safely locked up in my heart, and I shall keep my own identity inviolate.

"I need your aid, and you can help me, you, your Queen and your Boy Police.

"I will show you the game and you must hunt them down."

"I will be glad to."

"You will find it as difficult as ferrets hunting for rats in their underground dens, but you are as capable as the ferrets to drive them out."

"We can at least have a try at it.

"But who are they, miss?"

"There are men, yes, and women too.

"There are men living with a rope about their necks, others with a lifelong sentence of imprisonment staring them in the face, others deserving of shorter terms of jail existence."

"A hard lot."

"Oh yes, a hard lot indeed, and a desperately dangerous lot to hunt down, for they will be ready with knife and revolver to protect themselves, principally the knife of an assassin.

"They will be ever on the alert, and nerve, coolness, skill and cleverness alone can subdue them, and in you I feel I have the embodiment of all, young as you are."

"You are very complimentary, miss."

"No more than you deserve."

"Thank you, miss."

"But why call me miss?"

"Is it madam?"

"I will not say."

"Then what am I to call you?"

"Call me Dolores the Nun—or Sister Dolores."

"You are a Catholic then?"

"No matter what I am at heart, to you I am Sister Dolores, as you ask me what you shall call me."

"I am content, miss—orrat her Sister Dolores; but you are as great a mystery as the Boy Police," said New York Nat with a smile.

"With this difference, that some day the Boy Police and their young chief will be unmasked, and Sister Dolores will not, for my veil will but grow thicker as time passes."

New York Nat smiled, but answered:

"Tell me now, Sister Dolores, what it is that you wish me to do, or may I first bring my sister Olive to meet you, and hear what you have to say?"

"You will trust me then?"

"Under all circumstances."

"Remember, she is a woman, and it is said a woman can not keep a secret."

"You are a woman and you keep yours."

"Well, fetch your sister, but I must be known to no one else of your band."

"You are not known to us."

"I mean that you must not speak of me to your band, simply that you have game to hunt, and set them to work."

"I will.

"Excuse me now and I will fetch Olive."

He raised his slouch hat politely, for there was that in the bearing of the unknown woman that commanded respect, and hastening to the cottage not far distant he entered it.

The woman watched his departure calmly, and then mused aloud:

"Yes, he is just the one to hunt down this band of criminals, these merciless Destroyers of Deadman's Den, as they call themselves, and then my duty will have been done—he is coming, and his sister with him."

Back to the spot came New York Nat and with him was a young and beautiful girl.

She did not appear at a glance to be over sixteen, but a closer look revealed a face full of conscious power, reserve force and a resolute and daring nature.

She was very beautiful in face and form, and there was a strong resemblance between the brother and sister.

With a *neglige* sun hat upon her head, and a well fitting dress, she certainly was a most attractive young woman.

"This is my sister, Olive Chandler, Sister Dolores, and who is to be my fair ally in the work you wish me to do for you," said New York Nat as the two approached.

Sister Dolores held out her hand, which she had ungloved quickly, and pressing that of Olive, said:

"And a fair ally she is, as well as an able one, New York Nat.

"I am glad to have you also enlisted in my cause, my child, and much good will come of it, though the base passion of revenge may be at the bottom of my motive."

"I know your brother's secret, and yours, and he thought that I was his sister Olive in disguise; but he knows better now, and I wish your pledge, with his, to aid me to the end."

"You shall have it," was the prompt response of Olive.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A WOMAN'S MYSTERY.

"WILL you come into the cottage, madam, for there is my home?" said Olive.

"I am Sister Dolores to you, my child, or to your brother; but no, thank you, I prefer to remain out here in the open air and enjoy this grand view of the river."

"We can sit there on that fallen tree, and here, too, there are no eavesdroppers to hear what I have to say, and walls, you know, have ears."

"Very true, Sister Dolores."

"Be seated, please."

The veiled woman in deep black sat down with Olive upon one side of her, while New York Nat seated himself upon a rock in front of her, though he could not see her face.

After a pause, as though collecting her thoughts, Sister Dolores said:

"My story is a mysterious one, and I can offer but few explanations."

"Look upon it as upon a woman, a mystery beyond finding out."

"With no preliminaries regarding myself, let me tell you that I know of a band of criminals in this city who are guilty of the basest of crimes."

"They are sordid, avaricious, money-loving, and work for both gold and revenge."

"They are leagued together under a leader whom they know only as the Master of Life, for he is granted the power to kill at will."

"They are found in various walks of life, from the highest to the lowest, and in different parts of the city."

"Gain of course is their primary object, but they are vampires as well as money-getters, and believe it their duty to punish certain men for certain deeds."

"They prey upon man and woman alike, consider that the world owes them a living, and they must have it, and will, no matter who dies, who suffers, or who is robbed."

"They have one haunt where they meet once each week, at night, and then their rules are gone over, their booty divided, and plans laid for future deeds of crime."

"This meeting-place is known as Deadman's Den, and they call themselves 'Destroyers,' 'Vampires' and 'Ghouls,' and any name suits them."

"It is with their chief, the 'Master of Life' that I have to deal, for I shall strike them through him and he is my game, and it will be for you to one day bring him into my presence, New York Nat, and let him feel who it is that has struck the blow that has hurled him from his self-appointed Paradise into the Hades of remorse that justice will visit upon him."

"Then, when he feels this, I will be content and fade from the scene forever, leaving

you the master to bring to punishment the leader and his horde.

"Do you know now what you are to do, from what I have told you?" and the woman had spoken almost savagely as she neared the conclusion of her story.

"As I understand it, Sister Dolores, you are acting with revenge toward some one, who is the head of a band of criminals in this city?"

"Yes, New York Nat."

"You aim to gain two points, revenge for some wrong done you, and to wipe out a band of cut-throats?"

"That is just it. I wish to cancel a wrong, and to do a good deed in saving others from death, ruin, sorrow and suffering."

"And you desire me to be the instrument in your hands to accomplish your ends?"

"Exactly."

"Discovering, in some way I cannot understand, just who and what I am, you come to me instead of going to the legitimate officers of the law?"

"I do."

"You know the haunts of these crooks?"

"I can put you on the track of them."

"And the chief?"

"He will be the last one to discover, the blow that falls upon him being the master stroke."

"Yes."

"You are first to get at the haunts of these crooks, learn their ways, discover their varied crimes, then their place of meeting, which is underground, and when ready to strike then the chief must face me and he will know that all is lost and who has been his destroyer."

"You will profit largely, for there is a treasury of rich booty kept, and to the victors belong the spoils, you know."

"And you?"

"My payment will be in my revenge."

"Ah! is that sufficient?"

"More than sufficient."

"Is this a large band?"

"It is a very large band."

"How many, may I ask?"

"So large that they were first known as the League of One Hundred."

"That many are there?"

"Yes. One hundred and one."

"Do they always keep that number?"

"Yes, for if one is killed, there are others on probation to be admitted to the band."

"To down these Destroyers will be the grandest work of your life, New York Nat, as well as the most daring and dangerous, so you have a chance to withdraw your pledge now you know what you have to do."

"I but renew my pledge," was New York Nat's firm response.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE YOUNG SHADOWER.

At the words of New York Nat, the woman held out her hand and said:

"And I accept your double pledge."

"Now give me your orders, Sister Dolores."

"They are not orders, New York Nat, but instructions."

"I am ready for your instructions, then, Sister Dolores."

"Now, I can only say to you to come to the cathedral on Fifth avenue three days from this at nine o'clock in the morning."

"I will be there, and if you do not know me, I will recognize you and hand you a package."

"Bring it with you to your home and read over the contents with your sister."

"It will tell you what to do, but I must have time to think and plan, now that I have secured your aid."

"Good-by, and we will meet again at times when you least expect, for I will be as mysterious as you are, New York Nat."

She said the last words lightly, and holding out her hands, one to Olive, the other to



Nat, she turned and walked away with slow and stately tread.

"What do you make of her, Nat?" asked Olive, quickly.

"I will tell you more when I have found out, sis."

"You intend to shadow her?"

"By all means, for I must know who it is I work for."

"Especially when that one knows our secret, and may be a spy."

"She may be, yet she is not, I think."

"Now for a lightning change," and throwing open his coat, Nat drew out a wig of rather long hair, which, banding to Olive with a small comb, she began to smooth for him.

Taking from his pocket a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles with plain glasses in them, he put them on, and turned his black cravat, and the other side was red.

He took off his standing collar and replaced it with a broad turn-down one, and from the top of his slouch hat came a silk cap, which, after putting on the wig, he placed on his head.

His next act was to take off his coat and vest and turn them, and they were so made as to be perfect on the other side, only of light cloth.

Rolling up the bottoms of his pants, taking from his coat pocket a pair of gloves and a couple of small books, he cried:

"How am I now, sis?"

"The perfect country student, Nat; but she has gone over the hill and out of sight."

"I will catch her, never fear," and New York Nat, who, with his ring, spectacles, cap and turned clothing, low collar and different cravat would never be suspected as the youth the veiled woman had been talking to, hastened along with a slight limp in one foot.

He had even changed the expression of his face entirely, and a detective who had been dogging him, as he was before, meeting him thus metamorphosed, would have passed him by without the shadow of a suspicion that he was the game he had been tracking.

Over the hill went New York Nat, and observing the course taken by the woman, he felt sure that she would continue along the street she was on to the horse-cars, so he dodged around the corner of an old shanty, and forgetting his limp, ran rapidly around the block and coming again to the street he had left, met the veiled woman just at the corner, where she stood waiting for a car.

He glanced up to see if a car was in sight, and then opening one of his books began to read or study, apparently.

In reality, his eyes were upon the woman, who he hoped would remove her veil.

But this she did not do, and though she saw New York Nat beyond a doubt, for he was within twenty feet of her, she certainly could not have believed him to be the one she had lately entered into a strange and mysterious compact with.

The car soon came along and it was empty.

Both the woman and Nat got in, and the latter continued to study until his head fell back in an easy position and he appeared to sleep.

But through the nearly closed lids he watched the woman, hoping she might remove her veil.

But this she did not do, and at Fiftieth street she left the car, New York Nat seeing her intention managing to spring up, seem surprised and jump off, as though he had just awakened.

He walked on ahead of her and soon saw her turn into a Catholic Institution not very far from where she had left the car.

He gave a low whistle and muttered:

"Well, she has certainly gone where the good nuns go."

"Can she really be a nun?"

"It would not seem so, and have her seeking revenge also."

"Well, I have shadowed her here, and now to go and see my good friend, our Arizona ally, Mr. Walter Vanderlip, and tell him of the mysterious woman."

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### A LUCKY RECOGNITION.

NEW YORK NAT went on his way leisurely down the avenue, toward the elegant home of his ally from Arizona, Walter Vanderlip, whom the veiled woman had spoken of, it will be remembered.

As he reached the corner of a street two men turned into it just ahead of him.

"Well, if that is not Killer Bill, I am greatly mistaken."

"Yes, in spite of his being shaved and well-dressed, I recognize him, and if he is not playing some deep game of devilry, I am surprised."

"He certainly is, for Killer Bill is not dressed and shaved up without some motive of evil."

"And he is with a gentleman too."

"That looks bad, for if he is a gentleman he keeps bad company."

"I'll just see what this means," and New York Nat quickened his pace and got within earshot of the two men ahead of him.

"I like that gent's looks."

"He's young, handsome and if he is of the stripe of Killer Bill he belies his looks."

"Ah! what do I hear?"

What New York Nat overheard was the remark of the strange gentleman:

"I cannot for the life of me think what friend it is that has sent for me, or knew of my being in New York, as I only arrived two days ago and am a stranger here."

"I don't know, sir, any more than the gent told me to go to the hotel and find you and bring you to him at once."

"They told me at the hotel you had gone to Mr. Vanderlip's to stay, so I went there."

"And you say he is ill?"

"Yes, sir, very ill, and he's in hard luck, for he's been sold out, I learn, and his house is rented over his head, and he'd been all alone, only I went to nurse him when I was sent for."

"And you do not know his name?"

"No sir, for I've forgot it, for I did hear it; but there's the house, sir, where you see the notice on it 'For Sale.'"

It was the name of Walter Vanderlip that had caught the keen ear of the young detective, and what he overheard told him that the stranger was a friend of his Arizona ally, whom he so greatly admired and held a real affection for.

That Mr. Vanderlip's friend, a confessed stranger in the city, was in the company of a man whom New York Nat felt sure he recognized as one of the worst crooks in the city, needed investigation, and the brave young ferret captain was determined not to drop the trail until he knew more.

As they neared the residence, a handsome, four story brown-stone mansion, it bore the appearance of being unoccupied, and a sign 'To Let,' was upon the door.

Just as they neared the steps a man almost met them there, but passed on, though not until New York Nat had caught a sign pass between him and Killer Bill.

This sign caused Nat to glance quickly at the other, and he gave a low chuckle as he was sure that he recognized him also.

But he passed the two, and Killer Bill and Mr. Vanderlip's friend ascended the steps and the guide took a key from his pocket and opened the outer door and then the inner one.

New York Nat saw them disappear in the vestibule as he passed on, and crossing the street he got a look at the man who had passed them.

He had turned as the others entered the house and walking rapidly back ran up the steps and also disappeared.

"It is as I believed, Killer Bill's pal Red Fred."

"They have some deep plot, and I'm right in it too, but I'll be with Mr. Vanderlip's friend."

With this New York Nat recrossed the street, ascended the steps and found that the last one to enter had closed the outer door between them.

The catch lock had sprung, but that seemed no obstruction to New York Nat, as he took from his pocket a bunch of skeleton keys and inserting one opened the door.

He closed it behind him and the other opened also to his skeleton latch-key.

Closing it softly he saw that the house was furnished, but evidently was not believed to be occupied.

The card on the door had given an address only to be written to, referring to no real estate agent in the city.

Nat heard the last man rapidly ascending the steps, two floors above him, and replacing his keys he drew from his hip pocket a revolver, and with it ready for use began also to go up the stairway.

He had just reached the second floor, when he heard a voice above him cry out:

"Curses! I have dropped my knife."

"Come, hurry up, Fred, and use yours, or he'll better me."

This was enough for New York Nat to hear, especially as the answer came from the one called to:

"I'm with you, Bill."

Up the stairs went New York Nat three steps at a time, and as Red Fred reached the room on the top floor where a struggle was going on, the daring boy was but a few paces behind him.

#### CHAPTER VII.

##### NEW YORK NAT'S DEADLY HAND.

THE scene that New York Nat came upon was a startling one.

Upon the top floor, at the head of the stairs, a door opened from a hallway into a large room, the windows of which seemed tightly closed, for the gas was lighted there.

The room was furnished, and in the center, through the open door, Nat beheld two men struggling fiercely together.

One was the handsome young stranger he had seen with the man who, he now felt no doubt, was Killer Bill, the crook.

By the gas-light Nat saw that the stranger was bleeding from a wound in the head, and yet that he was fiercely struggling with his foe, who was using his brute strength to subdue him, but in vain, as the other was an athlete and his equal in strength in spite of being wounded.

Hastening to his pal's aid Red Fred had not heard the noiseless tread of New York Nat behind him, and with a drawn knife in his hand he was leaping about the struggling men in the endeavor to get a thrust at the stranger, who was guarding his body by that of his foe.

But suddenly there was a shot, a fall, and New York Nat dashed upon the scene as Red Fred fell in his tracks, his hand clutching the knife and burying the point an inch in the floor.

"Hands up, quick, Killer Bill, or my ferrets will down you!" cried New York Nat, and with a savage oath and livid face the man obeyed.

"Kindly slip these bracelets on that fellow, sir, while I keep him covered," continued New York Nat, tossing a pair of small handcuffs to the stranger, who caught them and quickly obeyed, ironing the crook's hands behind him.

"Now, Killer Bill, you are almost as safe as your pal Red Fred."

"You've kilt him," growled the crook with a look that was full of ferocity.



"Had to," was the laconic response.

"Who is you anyhow?"

"One of the Secret Service chief's rat-hunters, and I've been shadowing you, and have got you safe."

"What has I done?"

"Well, you brought that gentleman here to rob him, perhaps to kill him."

"He did, young sir, he came to where I am stopping with a friend and told me that a friend of mine was here, ill and in trouble, that he was from Nebraska and sent for me."

"He could not recall the name, he said, but suspecting no harm I came with him, and when I reached this room he bade me enter."

"I did so, ahead of him, when he struck me a severe blow, you see the wound, with some heavy instrument and I fell to my knees."

"But I've been used to hard knocks, for I am a plainsman, and I turned upon him, kicking his knife out of his hand, and grappling with him."

"Then he called for aid, and his comrade appeared, and, but for you, would have knifed me, so I owe you my life and you have made Sherman Canfield your friend while life lasts."

The stranger had spoken calmly, like one whom tragic scenes did not unnerve, and he held out his hand and grasped that of New York Nat, who replied modestly:

"I acted in the discharge of my duty, sir, and that man there on the floor, and this one are a pair of very vicious crooks."

"But you are wounded, sir, and need aid, so if you will guard that man I will quickly send assistance."

"I'll keep my eye on him, never fear, and when help has come it will be time enough to look to my wound, which is not a serious one by any means."

"I thought you said cops was with yer," growled Killer Bill.

"That was a blind to scare you."

"I'll soon be back, sir, and if that fellow gives you any trouble, just quiet him with a club, the billy he used on you, and which he should not object to as it's a namesake of his, eh, Bill?"

"Cuss you, who is yer, I ag'in asks?"

"One who knows you, Killer Bill, and will finger the reward on your head."

"But I must be off," and New York Nat hastened from the room, descended the stairs, and was soon upon the street, where none of the passers-by suspected the tragedy enacted in the handsome mansion that appeared to hold no occupant.

Going to a telegraph office, New York Nat hastily wrote a dispatch as follows, keeping his face from the gaze of those present:

"SECRET SERVICE CHIEF:—"

"Send at once to No. 44 West — th street, and you will find a prisoner there in the keeping of one who will explain what happened. A surgeon is also needed. Don't delay. UNKNOWN."

"Send with a rush," said New York Nat, thrusting a dollar bill into the operator's hand with the dispatch, and, before the man had half read it, he had disappeared from the office, and when looked for was not to be found.

But the dispatch was rushed through

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TWO PARDS.

SEATED in a handsome residence, upon one of the West Forties of New York City, the night before the Boy Captain of the Ferrets was introduced to the reader, were two gentlemen, conversing earnestly together.

It was the elegant bachelor house of Walter Vanderlip, a young man who had gone West under the shadow of a crime, which long after it was found he was not guilty of.

But he had made his fortune after starting as a cowboy and ending as a rancher, and becoming his father's heir, in conjunction with a son by a second marriage, he had arrived in New York City one night to fall the victim of a plot of his half-brother to put him out of the way and from which he had been saved by New York Nat.

As Nat found it very hard to hold his secret of the Unknown Ferret, yet have to communicate with the Secret Service chief, he had made a clean breast of it to Walter Vanderlip, who had at once become his devoted ally, entering into his schemes with vigor and deepest interest, and serving faithfully as the "middle man" in all transactions between the Boy Police and the legitimate officers of the law.

It was Walter Vanderlip, then, who sat in his home that night, conversing with his guest, Sherman Canfield.\*

Walter Vanderlip and Sherman Canfield were not unlike in appearance, being possessed of handsome faces, athletic forms, and easy, courteous address.

They had met upon the plains of the far West, had been in many a deadly danger together, had fought red-skins side by side and their friendship for each other was true and tried.

Coming to New York to remain for some time on business, Sherman Canfield had called upon his friend and at once had been taken to his home as his guest.

There was also a business matter of great importance which had caused Sherman Canfield to call upon Walter Vanderlip, as before leaving the West he had discovered certain trickery going on regarding a mine in Colorado in which the former rancher held a large interest, and he had said:

"My advice, Walter, is that you jump on the train and go at once to the mining country and nip this rascality in the bud."

"Your unlooked-for presence upon the scene would thwart the whole plot, and by saving your interest you will prevent a number of deserving people from being robbed."

"You are right, Sherman, and I will go; but there is one thing that troubles me about going."

"What is that?"

"Well, it's a long story, and to tell it you I must swear you to strict secrecy and leave you as my representative, for I feel sure that you will serve me in a good cause, as you have done many times before."

"Gladly! just tell me what I am to do."

"In the first place I am to swear you to secrecy."

"Go ahead."

"It is not my secret, but that of a youth to whom I owe it that I am not now a dead man, and that I am in possession of my fortune to-day."

"He is a young fellow with nerve enough for a dozen Indian-fighters, clever as he can be, handsome, self-educated, has been a wanderer, and is under a cloud, as I once was."

"He came to New York and found his sister, from whom he had been separated when both were very young, and with good intentions they turned detectives."

"The boy lives in an old mansion said to be haunted, and certainly as dreaded as the abode of evil spirits."

"It adjoins an old deserted graveyard, and there, in a vault, he had his home for awhile."

"His sister lives in a cottage near, and the boy is captain, the sister Queen, of a band of youngsters known as the Boy Police League."

"The two have redeemed these boys from an evil life, and now have them on duty as ferrets, and most valuable service have they rendered the chief of the Secret Bureau."

\*Sherman Canfield of Nebraska, and a young man whose life in the Wild West has been one of romance. Mr. Canfield is at present private secretary to Colonel W. F. Cody—Buffalo Bill.—THE AUTHOR.

"But they do their work secretly, are a mystery to the chief of the Secret Service, wholly unknown in fact, for he does not know who they are, nor can he find out, hard as he has tried."

"They have earned large rewards, which he has banked for them, and some day they will come out into the light and be known as they deserve to be."

"The chief is a particular friend of mine, and all the Boy Police communications are made through me, and you must take my place, for I will introduce you to him, and leave a letter for New York Nat telling him I am called away, that you are my representative and to trust you as he would myself."

"I accept the duty, Walter, and will represent you as you deserve," said Sherman Canfield.

Thus the two pards talked together until late at night and early the next morning Walter Vanderlip started for the Wild West, his friend promising to keep house for him until his return.

The following day it was that Sherman Canfield had the call from Killer Bill, and was led into the trap from which New York Nat rescued him.

## CHAPTER IX.

### NAT'S NEW ALLY.

WHEN New York Nat left the telegraph office, after sending his dispatch to the chief of the Secret Service, he entered a hotel and seeking a toilet-room quickly changed from his disguise back to what he had been when so unexpectedly recognized by Sister Dolores.

His rig was taken off and put away under his vest, the latter and his coat were turned, the standing collar replaced the turn-down one and the spectacles were removed.

Then he sauntered out of the toilet room wholly unnoticed, or if so, not suspected of being the one who had entered it a short while before.

There was then on his part a desire to see if aid had gone to the young man who had been left guarding the prisoner in the mansion where the tragedy had occurred, and he walked quickly along until he turned into the street on which the house was situated.

He had just done so when a carriage dashed quickly by him, following an ambulance, which rung its bell continuously for other vehicles to give it the right of way.

In the ambulance the quick eye of New York Nat caught sight of the surgeon, the driver and a couple of policemen, while the carriage following contained four persons.

"Promptly answered, but none too soon, I guess, for that young man," muttered Nat as he saw the ambulance and carriage stop before the door of the house.

Of course a crowd began to gather, and crowds seem always at hand when anything goes wrong, and New York Nat stopped with the others to take his view of what occurred.

He had left the doors closed, but not latched, and there sprung from the carriage the chief of the Secret Service, one of his captains, and two detectives in civilian attire.

They entered the house, when the surgeon and a policeman from the ambulance followed, the other two officers being left on guard outside.

Nat had not long to wait before the two detectives came out with Killer Bill and put him in the ambulance.

Soon after, the body of the dead man, Red Fred, wrapped in a blanket, was brought out and also placed in the ambulance, which at once drove away, though without the surgeon.

Half an hour after the chief appeared, accompanied by the surgeon and the young stranger, and the three entering the carriage, it rolled away, two policemen entering the



house with one of the detectives, to remain on duty.

New York Nat at once took his departure, though a number of the crowd remained, held by morbid curiosity, though they had learned nothing of what had occurred in the mansion.

"I will now go and report to Mr. Vanderlip," muttered New York Nat, and ten minutes after he ascended the steps of his ally's handsome house.

Dressed as he then was he was known to the butler, who had orders always to admit him, and who had come to regard him as a youth for whom Mr. Vanderlip was guardian.

"Good-morning, Master Chandler, but the master's gone, sir," said the butler.

"Gone, and where?"

"He was called to the far West, sir, very suddint like; but he left a letter for you, sir, which his friend, Mr. Canfield, has, for he's the master's guest, or master himself while Mr. Vanderlip's away, sir.

"He's anxious to see you, and you'll find him in the library, where the doctor just left him, for, poor gentleman, he has met with an accident, though I didn't hear just how."

With this information New York Nat entered the library, and Sherman Canfield was seated there, a bandage about his head.

"Ah, you must be Vanderlip's young friend Chandler?" he said pleasantly, as Nat entered.

"Yes, sir."

"I am Sherman Canfield of Nebraska, an old pard of our mutual friend Vanderlip, and of whom you may have heard him speak?"

"Very often, sir, and I am glad to meet you, Mr. Canfield; but I regret that Mr. Vanderlip left without seeing me."

"He was compelled to go, and at once, or lose heavily by fraud; but he left you this letter, and you will see that I am to take his place, as far as I can do so, and I will remain here until his return."

The letter was handed over and New York Nat read it over carefully.

Then he held out his hand, and much prepossessed with the Nebraskian, from what he had seen of him, he said:

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Canfield, and I am pleased to know I have one in whom I can trust in Mr. Vanderlip's absence, especially in a case that I will make known to you; but I hope you do not feel much inconvenience from your wound?"

"No, and I will tell you how I got it," and Sherman Canfield related the story to the innocent looking young detective, and added:

"I was introduced to the Secret Service chief by Vanderlip, so he knew me, and hearing my story had his surgeon dress my wound and then drove me here; but strangest of all I could not tell him who my daring rescuer was, and he had merely telegraphed the chief to come to the house where I waited with the prisoner.

"The chief sent an officer to the telegraph office but they could not describe the sender of the dispatch, who they said did not wait for his change.

"I described him, but no one knew him, and his identity is a mystery which I would give much to find out, and the chief is most anxious to do so."

New York Nat made no reply but silently took out his wig and spectacles and put them on, and then turned his coat.

"The secret is out!"

"You are my brave rescuer, New York Nat," cried Sherman Canfield, and the young detective smiled as he removed his disguise, it having served his purpose.

#### CHAPTER X.

##### A SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE.

THE confession of New York Nat, that he was the rescuer, silent confession that it was,

caused Sherman Canfield to grasp the youth by both hands and say warmly:

"My noble young friend, I owe you my life, for those men meant to kill me.

"Killer Bill, as they called one of them, was the tool of Red Fred, whom I knew on the border and once had a difficulty with, for he was a desperado, and he bears a scar I gave him.

"He sought to get even, and recognized me doubtless and shadowed me plotting to kill me, and rob me, for I brought a large sum of money East with me to invest for several western friends.

"So you see how much I am indebted to you, Pard Nat."

"I am glad I was able to be on hand, sir, and it was by chance only, for I thought I recognized Killer Bill, and wondered at seeing him with a gentleman.

"Then I overheard Mr. Vanderlip's name spoken and that settled it with me, for I would have shadowed you to Kingdom Come."

"Well, the Secret Service chief shall know who my brave preserver is, and—"

"Only as the Unknown, sir, remember, for he does not know me as I am, as New York Nat or in any character save the leader of the Secret Ferrets."

"Yes, I must remember that, and all of Vanderlip's injunctions.

"When he told the chief I would act as ally in his place, the latter smiled and said:

"Well, Mr. Canfield, I am glad that one other is to know who this Wizard of Mystery is, for in time I will find out."

"So he called me the Wizard of Mystery, sir?" with evident pride in the name.

"He did, indeed, and said that it was the best name he knew for Vanderlip's unknown friend.

"He then spoke of you most highly, and said that you had done more to shadow crooks and ferret out crime than half his force; but did you know that there was a reward offered for both Red Fred and Killer Bill, as they were escaped life convicts?"

"Yes, sir, and the reward will go to the Boy Police League fund, though I think, as the means for the capture of the one and the killing of the other, you should have the reward."

"No, indeed, Nat, not a dollar would I touch.

"Though not overburdened with wealth I am still comfortably off and hold a good paying position, so do not need money.

"You earned it, and most daringly, and all belongs to you individually, for your band were not in it."

"Oh, yes, sir, we divvy on all we get in, whether singly or as a band we earn it."

"You have had to take life a number of times, Nat, Vanderlip told me, and Red Fred adds another to the list."

"Yes, sir, I regret to say I have been driven to take human life in several cases, but it is always with regret, yet it is a necessary evil, and to save life and in self-defense I have acted only with deadly results.

"But now, Mr. Canfield, I have a story to tell you.

"I came here to make it known to Mr. Vanderlip, but as he is gone and you are his representative and are now our ally, I will tell you, and well assured am I that you will advise me for the best and give your candid opinion in the matter, which I confess mystifies me even more than I have mystified the Secret Service chief."

"Out with the story, Nat, and I will try and do all I can for you, so as not to have Vanderlip and yourself ashamed of me."

"No fear of that, sir, from what I have seen of you," and New York Nat at once told of the call he had received from the mysterious Sister Dolores, and all that she had said, while he added as he concluded his story:

"But strangest of all, sir, is the fact that

she knew me, my sister Olive and all about my band."

"You do not understand how?"

"I have not the slightest idea, sir, for I have kept my secret from all save Mr. Vanderlip."

"May not one of your band have betrayed the secret?"

"I am sure not, sir, for I would vouch for each one of them as I would for myself.

"Then too we had one traitor in our midst, and he has gone to visit foreign lands, and I found him out before he had a chance to sell us.

"We are bound by oaths, the strongest ties and money interests that keep us together, not to speak of a dread of punishment should the law overhaul bygone records, while our pride in our band is such we could not prove unfaithful."

"Then how do you account for this woman's knowledge of you?"

"It is beyond accounting for, sir."

"It would be well to find out who she is."

"I did shadow her, changing my clothing and appearance, as you just saw me do, when she left, and I rode down in the car with her until I saw her enter a Catholic Institution, which seemed to carry out the idea of her being a nun."

"Might she not have gone there as a blind, believing that she would be shadowed, as you call it?"

"Ah! I had not thought of that, and it was easy to do.

"Next time I will be sure where my game goes into hiding, and, as you speak of it, I remember now that she wore several very elegant rings on her left hand, and nuns do not do that."

"That is what I would call a give-away, Nat."

"But I am in this game with you to win, and I have little to do, so command me when and how you please.

"I believe, from what you say, the woman is playing a part, and is not a nun; but you can soon learn more when she unfolds her plot to you, and my idea is that she is acting from revenge, and yet the mystery hangs over us of how she discovered your secret.

"I will report to the chief that his Unknown Detective was my rescuer, and thus add to your fame with him."

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### A WIZARD OF MYSTERY.

DURING the afternoon the Secret Service chief dropped in upon Sherman Canfield to see how he was.

He found the young man reading in the library, and taking matters quietly.

"Well, Mr. Canfield, I am glad to see that you feel no ill effects from the severe blow given you by that scoundrel."

"Thanks, chief, I am all right, for the surgeon called and re-dressed the wound, and I do not mind it.

"I've had too many bard knocks out upon the frontier to care for a slight wound.

"In fact, it stunned me for an instant, or I would have been more than a master for the fellow."

"You were fortunate to escape so lightly, for I have had a talk with the prisoner and he lays it all upon the dead man.

"He lies, of course, but he says that Red Fred told him you had just come from the West, and owed him a large sum of money, and if he would get you into the house upon some excuse, he would force you to pay up.

"This story does not go, as Killer Bill struck you that blow the moment he ushered you into the room before him, and when I reminded him of this he said that you attacked him.

"He declares that it was only for Red Fred to get his money that he aided him, and that although he escaped from prison,



he has since been leading an honest, hard-working life."

"Indeed!"

"So he says."

"Well, here is his record, and that of Red Fred, since they escaped from prison, for they have been shadowed, and were very soon to have been pulled as crooks guilty of many crimes."

"Ah! this is a record indeed," and the chief glancing over the paper handed to him, continued:

"Killer Bill, sentenced for life for murder, escaped from prison May 30th two years ago, and began his old life of crime again."

"Was, with Red Fred, who escaped with him, guilty of the robbery of Mr. Edwards's house in Jamaica, Long Island, and of Benjamin West's mansion near Long Branch."

"Robbed Jacob Sweitzer's store in Harlem, and garroted a lady on Riverside Drive; also robbed a child in the Park of her ring and necklace, striking the nurse a blow that stunned her."

"Red Fred was Killer Bill's pal in all of his evil work, and they were allied to a gang of crooks the headquarters of whom must have been in the vacant house where they led Mr. Canfield, and which is rented, furnished, from the owner who is in Europe."

"Well, Mr. Canfield, this is a record, indeed, but, may I ask you where you got it?"

"From the one who was my rescuer, sir."

"Ah! and I have been unable to find out who he was?"

"Simply your Unknown Ferret, sir."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Vanderlip's *protege*?"

"The same, sir."

"You saw him, then?"

"Yes, sir, but did not know him when he came to my aid."

"He left me with the prisoner, mind you, then called afterward, when, having stood on the pavement, he saw you arrive with your men."

"He then got Vanderlip's letter left with me for him, and told me that he had shadowed Killer Bill to the house with me, recognized Red Fred, and with skeleton keys he let himself into the mansion."

"He had then watched what took place, and when here wrote out that record for you, asking me to hand it to you."

"Well, I'd take his testimony as I would my own."

"But, he killed Red Fred, and is unknown to me, so I can only make myself responsible for the act, telling the coroner that he came to his death at the hands of one of my detectives who must, for reasons, have his identity covered for the present."

"As Killer Bill is an escaped convict, he will be sent back to prison, and so no trial follows, which is fortunate, as I could not produce my man, who is more of a Wizard of Mystery to me, Mr. Canfield, than ever."

"He is a wizard, sir, and a mystery."

"I am surprised myself at him."

"Of course there is no need trying to discover him through you," slyly said the chief.

"No more than through our mutual friend, Vanderlip, chief," was the smiling reply.

"Very well, he must remain incog. until he sees fit to remove the mask; but I would give my year's pay to know who he is and what he is."

"I can tell you what he is, chief?"

"Well?"

"One of the cleverest detectives that I ever heard of."

"He is all that and more—as I said, a Wizard Ferret."

"You expect to see him soon again?"

"I do, sir."

"Say to him, please, that there are rewards

out for the capture of Killer Bill and they will be held subject to his order."

"I will, sir."

"And thank him for me for his good work, and say that he is right, for that house was the headquarters of a band of crooks and a large lot of plunder is there, the proceeds of the sale of which will also go to the Unknown and his men," and the chief took his departure.

## CHAPTER XII.

### NAT CALLS A SPECIAL MEETING.

THE second meeting.

New York Nat felt proud of his day's work, and justly so, for he had much to tell his sister upon his return that evening.

He condemned himself for having given Sister Dolores the opportunity to trick him, did she wish to do so, by going into the institution, believing she was being shadowed, and then leaving it by a different gate, or after a long while when she felt her shadower was convinced that she was what she had implied, if not asserted, a nun.

"Next time I will show more sense, for I am determined to know who this woman is who so thoroughly knows me," he muttered.

"Now to post the boys of a special meeting for the third night from this."

He wended his way then to one of the most prominent hotels in the city, and while standing gazing over the papers on the news-stand, a bell-boy in uniform came up to him quietly.

"Well, Flip, I was waiting for you."

"I had a call just as you came in, Nat, but am on deck now."

"A meeting the third night from this, so post your men."

"O. K., Cap," and Flip the bell-boy ran off to answer a sharp call from the clerk of "Front!"

A few minutes after New York Nat left the hotel and entering a district messenger office, wrote something on a paper, put it in an envelope, and said:

"I have a special messenger here who generally carries my letters."

"Yes, Number 12," and the clerk called that number and a bright-faced youth came forward.

"Carry this letter to the address—no answer, and keep the change," said New York Nat.

The boy left the office, glanced at the envelope and saw that it was addressed simply:

"Teaser."

He opened it and read:

"Teaser, a special meeting for the third night from this."

"Inform your men."

"CAPTAIN."

Teaser loafed about for awhile and then returned to duty, while New York Nat meanwhile had gone to a telegraph office and asked to see one of the delivery boys there, whom he spoke of as "Parson."

The youth soon appeared, and about the same thing was said to him, after which the young ferret chief went to a boot-blackening stand presided over by a short, stout youth who had a partner who was long and slim.

"Boots blacked, sir?"

"Yes, Chub, and report to your men that a special is called for the third night from this."

"All right, sir, it's a patent-leather shine you gits here," and Chub watched his patron as he walked away, and muttered to himself:

"Another haul on hand and that means more money, for the Cap is on his rounds."

New York Nat's next visit was to a news-stand down-town, presided over by a sharp-featured youth whom he addressed as Freckles, and to whom he also made the remark that there was a special meeting of the

Boy Police called for the third night from that.

In his walk the young ferret chief met several bootblacks and newsboys, with whom he had a few words, apparently knowing them well, and then passed along the wharves for quite a distance, coming upon a darkly bronzed-faced youth whom he addressed as Blow, and with whom he held a short conversation.

Taking a car he got off near the Police Headquarters, and boldly entering it asked the attendant on duty if he could speak with a young man there known as Keno.

The youth was called, and as there were others near, New York Nat said:

"Keno, a special meeting of the members of the Social Club is called for the third night from this, so don't fail."

"All right, I'll be there and I'm obliged for the notice."

"Shall I tell the members I see?"

"I wish you would," and Nat left the quarters where he knew he was so much wanted, yet wholly unknown, and under the roof of which, acting as an assistant clerk, he had one of the brightest members of his Boy Police League.

Having gone the rounds of those whom he posted, when they were wanted for a special meeting, Nat took the Sixth Avenue Elevated cars for up-town, and left them at the station nearest to the old mansion where he had his own quarters.

That part of the city was not thickly settled, and stealing along by the old haunted mansion, he watched his chance, when he saw no one in sight, and leaping the wall made his way through the overgrown foliage of the grounds to the rear of the house.

A key he took from his pocket opened a cellar door, and he disappeared within.

All was darkness there, but he knew just where to find a lantern, and lighting it he passed along to the steps leading to the floor above, ascended them, and leaving the lantern continued on up to the second story.

The house, closed tightly, was dark and gloomy, the furniture was old, worn, faded and going to destruction and upon all rested ruin and desolation.

The third floor was reached, and then opening a door he found himself in a room which was furnished with a bed, table and some chairs.

A huge and savage-looking dog lay upon a rug, but greeted him with demonstrations of affection, and received the food the young detective had brought for him.

Lighting a lamp, for he dared not open the board shutters, New York Nat made another toilet for the evening, and soon after left the old mansion just as it was getting dark and went to the cottage where Olive dwelt, and meeting her at the door said:

"Come, sis, I am going to take you to the theater to-night."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BETRAYED BY A RING.

NEW YORK NAT had dressed himself with care for an evening out, and looked very handsome as he entered the theater with his sister.

He was always proud to take his sister out with him, and could not but see how much admiration her beauty attracted.

His seats were in the orchestra, almost within touching distance of one of the boxes, and soon after they were seated a gentleman and lady entered the box nearest to them.

The gentleman was tall, courtly, with a bronzed, handsome mustache that curled at the ends, and he was dressed in full evening suit.

The lady was in full dress, and her beauty at once riveted the eyes of New York Nat upon her.

Her hair was of the hue of bronzed gold, and seemed to be of most luxuriant growth,



while her eyes were dark, large, intensely expressive and very beautiful.

Every feature of her face was perfect, and she was most exquisitely attired.

She wore large solitaires in her ears, a star of diamonds in her hair and a crescent in her bosom.

As though the heat of the theater oppressed her she used a jeweled fan with one hand that was ungloved.

She seemed all unconscious of the great admiration she commanded, and her face wore a dreamy expression, a certain sadness dwelling in the eyes as though life to her was not altogether a dream of bliss.

Until the curtain rose she conversed with the handsome man by her side, all unmindful of the glasses leveled upon her and her companion.

The moment the curtain rose she became all attention to the play, dropping her hand upon the cushioned rail of the box before her.

And upon that hand the eyes of New York Nat became riveted.

His gaze had suddenly fallen upon a ring she wore.

It was a unique ring, and one that must have cost a small fortune in its way, for it was a coiled snake, in the center being a huge emerald, and the eyes of rubies, while the body of the snake was of closely-set small diamonds.

Strangest of all the ring was worn upon the marriage finger, and there was no other on that hand.

New York Nat gazed at the ring with rapt attention until it was fully photographed in his memory, and then his eyes were turned upon the other hand from which she also had removed the glove.

He saw that upon the left arm was a bracelet of diamonds, and upon the right one of solid gold.

Upon the right hand were several rings, each one a solitaire, and a diamond, a sapphire a ruby and an emerald, and thin bands of gold holding the splendid jewels.

Having neglected the play, in his admiration of the beautiful woman and her rings, New York Nat said in a low tone:

"Sis."

"Yes, Nat."

"Look at that lady."

"Is she not beautiful?"

"She is."

"But look at the hand resting on the velvet rail of the box."

"It is a beautiful hand."

"Ever seen it before?"

"How can I tell?"

"Look at the ring."

"Ah! how strange."

"Get a glance at the rings on the other hand when you can do so."

In a few minutes Olive whispered:

"I have seen them."

"Well?"

"Well, it may be a coincidence, but it seems I have seen them before."

"Where?"

"We must not talk now."

"I will tell you later."

"I will slip out during the next act, and you keep your face turned so that she will not see you."

"I will meet you as you come out of the theater."

"All right, Nat," was the low response, and then they devoted their attention to the play, both keeping their heads turned so that the lady in the box could not see their faces.

In fact the lovely woman seemed not to observe any one in the theater, not once glancing over the audience, or at the brother and sister seated almost under the box rail and within reach of her face.

When the curtain went down at the end of the first act, New York Nat quietly slipped out, and Olive took his seat, as

she could better hide herself from the lady in the box, and she kept her back almost toward her.

Nat meanwhile had hastened away from the theater to the District Messenger office where Teaser was employed and soon found that youth.

Teaser and one other boy were alone in the office, save the night clerk, and calling him to one side, Nat asked:

"When do you get off?"

"At nine."

"It is within a few minutes of that time, so join me on the Square below," and leaving the office, Nat was soon joined by the Messenger Ferret and he said to him:

"Come with me to the theater and I will point out to you a lady I wish you to shadow."

"Under no circumstance lose sight of her until you know where she lives, and see if the gentleman with her lives there too."

"All right, Cap'n Nat, I'll do it."

"But who is she?"

"I do not know, but I wish to find out."

"Her face I never saw, but she wears a ring that has betrayed her, or I am greatly deceived."

"You might see if there is any one in the theater who can tell you who she is, and I'll try and find out also."

"She is in the box on the right, lower box, and there is only one gentleman in it with her."

"Have you money to buy your ticket?"

"Lord, I don't have to, for I'm in my uniform, and I come the dodge that I'm on the hunt for some one—see?"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### ON THE WATCH.

BEFORE parting with Teaser, New York Nat told him to have his report written out for him and he would call the next day at the office and get it from him, of course pretending to send him off on a message.

Then he entered the theater and took a seat in the rear, where he could see the lady and gentleman in the box but remain unseen himself by them.

Teaser meanwhile had, as he said, "braced the ticket sharp," and gotten in without paying, telling him he was going in to find a gentleman for whom he had an important message.

A moment after Nat saw him enter and take a stand, from whence he appeared to be very diligently searching for some one in the house.

But his eyes were on the two persons in the box, and soon he asked an usher:

"Say, brother, can you tell me who the gent and lady is in the box yonder?"

"I has heard but has forgot."

"Do you know any one who has heard and remembers?"

"Ask Jim Sykes."

"Where is he?"

"Yonder—he's my side-pard."

Teaser sought the "side-pard" of the forgetful usher, and said in a confidential way:

"I'm on the hunt for a gent I don't know, and your side-pard told me you might help me—have a smoker?"

Jim Sykes took the cigar offered, and when asked who the gentleman in the box was said he didn't know his name, but he came often to the theater, and now and then with the lady who was then with him.

He, however, always had a lady with him and never failed to take a box, and was said to be rich.

Teaser went about finding out who the lady and gentleman were in a quiet way, but with little success.

When the curtain fell at the end of the play, he saw the two in the box rise and leave the theater.

He had already gone out and engaged a

cab, having it remain across the street from the theater, and while waiting for the couple to pass out, he suddenly beheld his young Ferret Captain with a beautiful girl upon his arm.

"Well, the Cap is a Jim Dandy, and knows a pretty girl when he sees her."

"Wonder who she is?"

"May be she's our Queen, for as she always comes masked to the meetings there is not one of us, save the captain, knows her, or has ever seen her face."

"If she is our Queen, then the Boy Police have got a mascot worth having, and no mistake—Ah! here comes my game."

He was all attention at once and began to watch the couple, saw them get into a carriage and drive away, and running to his cab he sprung upon the box and at once began to follow the vehicle.

In the mean time New York Nat and Olive had left the theater, and taking the Elevated Road were whirled rapidly to the upper part of the city.

Leaving the cars at the station nearest the cottage, they began slowly to walk home together, and Nat said:

"Well, sis, what did you discover?"

"That it was a lucky thought your going to the theater to-night, and that a fortunate circumstance placed us near that box."

"Yes, and you knew the lady?"

"Oh, no, only the ring."

"Where have you seen it before?"

"I saw it, or its counterpart, this morning."

"Where?"

"On the finger of Sister Dolores."

"Yes, and did you notice the rings on the other hand?"

"Yes, Nat, they were wire-like bands of gold with different stones in them, all on the third finger, and they were a sapphire, emerald and ruby."

"Then such rings cannot have been accidentally matched on the hands of the lady in the box last night."

"It would be a most remarkable coincidence if such was the case."

"It could not be the case, and was not."

"That means that you think the lady in the box and Sister Dolores one and the same."

"Just that, sis."

"I half believe you are right, and that she is not a nun after all."

"That is my opinion, and tracking her, or rather finding her out by accident, shows how readily one can solve a mystery, and after all, how very easy it might have been by some chance that she found out our secret."

"Very true; but what will you do now, Nat?"

"I have set Teaser upon her track."

"He is a good one for the work."

"Yes, sly as a fox, cunning as an Indian and plucky, while he has a mind that plans quickly."

"He will find out where she lives and the gentleman also, and I will do the rest."

"And keep your engagement with her at the cathedral?"

"Certainly, but not let her suspect that I know her."

"Suppose she recognized us at the theater?"

"She did not appear to do so; but if she did we must take our chances, sis."

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### TEASER'S REPORT.

THE next morning New York Nat slept late, for it was after two before he retired.

He went over to Mrs. Herbert's cottage, where Olive boarded, and he often got his meals, and had breakfast, after which he went down-town to look up Teaser and learn what he had discovered regarding the couple in the box at the theater.



He wrote a note in the messenger office, and asked for Teaser by his number and handed it to him.

Ten minutes after the two met over in Madison Square Park, and Nat said:

"Well, Teaser, what was the result of your shadowing last night?"

"I took a cab when they got into a carriage, and followed them.

"Their carriage stopped at No. — West Thirty-seventh street, and then drove around to the stable, for there is one in the rear alley.

"I waited until I saw the lights put out, and the gent did not show up."

"What time was it?"

"Nine o'clock."

"And he remained there?"

"He did, I guess.

"The house is a plain one, but mighty comfortable, and fitted up fine, for I got a glimpse into the hall through the open doors, and the parlor was lit up and curtains raised.

"A man servant let 'em in, and I seen a girl with a lace cap on at an upper window, so with the butler and coachman and maid, they must have a cook, and are well off with servants."

"Well, Teaser, you have found out all that you can about them, and now it is for me to discover who and what they are," and Nat took a car, and going up to Thirty-seventh street, had a look at the house.

Then he strolled down the alley in the rear and halted at a stable where a coachman was washing his carriage.

"I say, my man, is it here that a horse and buggy are advertised for sale?" asked Nat, innocently, for he saw that the stable belonged to the place which the couple lived in.

"No, sir, there's nothing for sale here, and I don't know of any stable in this alley that has anything for sale in the way of horseflesh," the man answered, politely.

"You've got a hard job of it cleaning your carriage, for it looks like country mud."

"It is, sir.

"The master took an early drive this morning up into Westchester, and the roads were muddy."

"I should think so.

"Is not this Mr. Mr. Vancourt's house?"

"No, sir, it is Mr. Ray Redmond's place."

"Indeed! I have heard he is very rich."

"Well, sir, he's got plenty, I guess, for he lives fine, only he's not often at home to enjoy it."

"That's rather hard for a man not to be able to enjoy his home; but I saw him at the theater last night."

"Yes, sir, he went with his wife to the theater, and it's seldom she goes out, poor lady, save alone, and she must be awful lonesome."

"I guess so; but have a cigar—take them both, for I have more," and Nat handed out several cigars, which the coachman took with hearty good will and profuse thanks, while he placed a bench for the youth and said:

"Sit down, sir, for some of the men may come along soon from whom you can find out what you are looking for."

"Thank you," and Nat sat down and began to be entertaining.

He had a wonderful knife with him which he took out to use, and so that it would catch the coachman's eye.

It had a pair of scissors in it, a corkscrew, file, hoof-cleaner and lancet, in addition to several blades, and the coachman at once offered to buy it.

"I would not sell it, but, as I've got another, I'll give it to you."

The coachman was delighted with his generous visitor, and Nat seemed pleased to remain and talk.

Without appearing to do so, he questioned

the man closely about his master, and discovered that Mr. Redmond had been married some two years, that he was a gentleman of leisure, though often away from home, but lived in grand style, and was most generous to his wife, though he appeared to neglect her.

Sometimes he would not come home for weeks at a time, though he had seen him in the city, though of course he did not let Mrs. Redmond know that he had done so.

She was a lovely woman, and very kind and good to her help, for she kept four servants.

She drove out alone, or with her maid, and did not appear to be very happy, though she never reproached her husband and was always gentle and kind in her bearing toward him.

Whether her gentleness was however a calm before the storm the coachman was not assured, as he had sometimes feared that she had an eye on her husband's behavior away from home and was only waiting a chance to entrap him, for she frequently went out on foot alone, and in different dresses, so that she was completely disguised.

As the coachman talked on, without intending to give any secrets away, New York Nat quietly took out his pocketbook and said:

"Now do you know that I think you are a pretty good judge of a horse, and I want you to look me up a good driving animal, and one that is a saddle horse as well.

"It will cost you some trouble, and some thing for car fare, for I wish a buggy and harness besides, so take your time and look me up just what will suit me—here, take this ten-dollar bill for expenses, and I'll give you its mate when I find the animal and rig I want, so I will not look up that advertisement any further," and as Nat walked away he muttered to himself:

"I have unmasked Sister Dolores."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE APPOINTMENT KEPT.

TRUE to his word, New York Nat was on hand at the cathedral on the day and hour appointed by Sister Dolores.

He went in and took a seat near the door on the right-hand aisle, as he had been told to do, and soon after a Sister of Charity came in and entered his pew.

She knelt devoutly and seemed to be unconscious of all else save her prayers, and Nat was admiring her for her deep devotion, when suddenly he saw her hand held out toward him, and in it was a letter.

He started, for in the devout worshiper he felt sure he now recognized Sister Dolores.

He glanced about him to see that no one observed the act, and beheld only a few persons in that part of the church, and no one could see him take the letter.

Quietly he put it away, and soon after the Sister arose and glided from the cathedral.

New York Nat was not long in following her, and as he gained the street he beheld her turn the corner nearest across the avenue.

As he reached the corner he saw a carriage drive away, as though it had been waiting at the curb around the corner.

She would not have had time to enter any of the houses near, and so must have gotten into the carriage.

New York Nat noticed that the coachman had a claret-colored livery on, and the horses were iron-gray, and were going at a rapid pace.

He at once saw that he could not follow, no hack being near, and taking a car, he went down to the alley in the rear of Ray Redmond's house.

The stable was closed, but through a grated window that was open he saw that the carriage was gone.

He went away, but in about two hours re-

turned to find the carriage just entering the other end of the alley.

The coachman, who had given his name to Nat as Jerry Dunlap, wore a claret-colored livery, and the horses were iron-gray.

"I thought as much," muttered Nat, and as Jerry Dunlap leaped from his box he greeted his visitor cordially and said:

"I've got the horse and rig you want, sir."

"I am glad to hear it."

"A gent was going to Europe, and will sell out at one third what it cost him.

"The horse is a sorrel, and can trot in three minutes, while he single-foot racks under the saddle.

"The buggy is a Brewster, and all in perfect condition, blankets, robes, and all, while the price is but three hundred and fifty—dirt cheap."

"Well, Jerry, we will have a look at the outfit, as soon as you can get off; but you have again been to the country?"

"Yes, sir, the missis went to church, and then for a long drive out beyond the Park.

"She's very devout, sir, and dresses like a Catholic Sister when she goes to church.

"I'll go with you, sir, while my horses are cooling off."

Jerry soon after led the way to a private stable and Nat saw the horse and rig.

His own eye told him it was a bargain, so he took out a roll of bills and paid the money, while his quick eye detected the gentleman slip a twenty and a five into Jerry's palm, for the sly coachman was drawing commission at both ends.

But Nat pretended not to see it, and the two got into the buggy and went for a short drive, and Jerry got his extra ten as promised, while the young Ferret Captain gleaned more information from him about his master and mistress.

Nat was much pleased with his purchase, and drove with Jerry to add to it a saddle and bridle, after which he said:

"I'll drop you at your alley, Jerry; but I will call in and see you again."

"So do, sir, for you've been most kind to me."

Then Nat drove to a stable up near the Park and put his horse to board there, for he felt that he needed just such an animal for use.

This done he went with all haste to the cottage where Olive dwelt, and calling her out the two sat down at their favorite place on the river-bank to read the letter given the young ferret by Sister Dolores.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### SISTER DOLORES'S SECRET.

THE Ferret Captain kept nothing from the beautiful young Queen of the Boy Police.

He knew how valuable was her advice, what a clever mind she had, and that her early experience as a little girl dancer with an Italian organ-grinder, and later as a flower girl in the streets of New York, had given her a wonderful insight into lower life in the metropolis, made her conscious of her power, and gave her a reserve strength that was most valuable to the Unknown Detective.

Olive possessed an utterly fearless nature. She had gone alone at midnight to the old haunted mansion to seek Nat when she had learned of something of importance which he should know, and little cared for its haunting memories.

She felt fully able to take care of herself, and was a good pistol-shot, and had the pluck to protect herself too.

In fact she was an invaluable ally of New York Nat and his young ferrets as one and all of them had realized on a number of occasions.

"Well, Nat, we have found out very quickly who Sister Dolores is, only we do not know how it is that she managed to get hold of our secret," said Olive, when she had



heard Nat's story of how he had gotten the information from Coachman Jerry Dunlap.

"Yes, and now we will discover, I suppose, what it is she wishes the Boy Police to aid her in," and Nat opened the envelope handed to him in the cathedral by Sister Dolores.

He unfolded several pages of closely written paper and began at once to read it aloud.

It was as follows:

"How I discovered that you were the leader of a band of Unknown Ferrets, matters not, so that I have the knowledge, and have sought you as a means to an end, and, with your Boy League of Detectives as a means to gain an end that will result in good.

"Who I am also makes no difference to you, more than to tell you that I am a woman who has lived on the dark side of life, becoming a sacrifice for others, and now, having my eyes opened to the enormity of a great sin that I can check, feel that it would be criminal in me longer to allow its trail of iniquity to bring ruin, sorrow and death to those who are innocent of wrong.

"To check this sin, to end it before it has done still greater harm, I come to you, New York Nat, and ask you to ferret out the whole baleful and mysterious crime.

"What I wish you to do is that which I cannot do.

"Were I to go to the chief of the Secret Service he would go a different way about crushing the crimes from what you will, and I would have to be known in the case.

"Now to my charges against the 'Master of Life and his Destroyers of Deadman's Den,' the one hundred and one criminals leagued together to rob, to destroy, to kill, innocent victims.

"Crimes have been committed, as you well know, the fountain source of which could not be discovered.

"Sins of the past rest to-day in deepest mystery, and large rewards have failed to trace the guilty ones.

"Now to see what you can do, New York Nat.

"There are in New York City one hundred and one men leagued together for crime.

"They are bound by the deadliest oaths, and betrayal means death by torture.

"Each one is a spy upon the other, and few are known to each other, as at their meetings they all wear long black robes and masks.

"They meet once each week and make their reports, and receive their orders from their master spirit, called the Master of Life as he has the power to order, without question, the instant death of any member at the meeting, and to command the executioners he selects to kill the doomed man.

"They prey upon their fellow-men and women, and the highest and lowest may fall victims to their love of gold, revenge or dread of discovery.

"A rich man will be taken from his home and gold forced from him, or his life taken.

"A young girl will be kidnapped and those who love her forced to pay heavy ransom for her release.

"The grave of some wealthy man will be robbed of its body by those Ghouls of the Grave, and gold alone will get it back again.

"A mother's heart will be wrung with anguish at the loss of a loved child, until she pays well to have it returned to her.

"A merchant will be threatened with disgrace unless he pays a silence fee.

"Men in every walk of life, and women, too, will be blackmailed by being secretly accused of crimes to be made public unless they pay for silence—"

Here Nat ceased reading, and said:

"Olive, this is all true, as I know."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE REVELATION.

"Yes, Nat, what she says is not over done, and the police, detectives and our Boy Ferrets have not been able to solve the mystery of these many crimes. But go on with the revelation of Sister Dolores," said Olive, eagerly.

Continuing, New York Nat read:

"All these mysterious crimes, in a measure, emanate from one source, the One Hundred and One Destroyers.

"Their ruling spirit is a man of many masks, a man with the face of an angel and the heart of a demon.

"He is one whose voice is music, whose nature appears as gentle as a woman's, a man of brilliant mind, one who has seen the world in all its phases, who knows men and women as an open book.

"He is a consummate actor, for there is no part that he cannot play, from comedy to tragedy.

"He can impersonate a saint as well as he can play the part of Satan.

"He is known in society under the one name, and an *alias* follows him through the masks he wears, for, as a married man in one house he is a bachelor in another, and it is for you to track him through his phases of life and bring him to the justice he deserves.

"The meeting of the Destroyers is held in the lowest part of the city, in an underground place which they call the Deadman's Den.

"It is here they bury their dead, should one of their number have to be executed.

"The meeting is held on Friday nights, between the hours of twelve and one o'clock.

"Where this Deadman's Den is I do not know, and it will cause you to keep a very close watch on Friday nights, in different parts of the city, until you track the men to the rookery beneath which the underground assembling place is.

"Once you have placed this, and you can shadow the men going and coming from there to their living haunts, and find out who they are, thus marking them for your game when you are ready to spring your trap.

"The leader is a man of six feet, upright in carriage, with broad shoulders, a firm, quick step with a military air.

"He will be disguised of course in going to the Den, but his face is dark, his hair black, eyes large, full of fire and intensely piercing when he does not assume a dreamy, blue expression.

"He can be found on certain nights at a large and fashionable gambling saloon on Broadway, and there he is known as the proprietor of the establishment, while none of its patrons, who know him as a fashionable man about town, recognize him in the disguise he wears there, of white wig, mustache white as snow, spectacles, dressing like a pronounced sport of the flashy kind, save a red fez upon his head, and wearing such a profusion of magnificent diamonds that he is known as Palos, the King of Diamonds.

"He pretends to be a Greek and speaks English with an accent.

"Knowing now the man you have to shadow, I leave it to you to dog him to death.

"You can track him through his own masks, and when you know him as he is, set your trap to catch him and the band who follow his will.

"I need not tell you more, save that I have confidence in your ability to track him down, and rid the world of a monster and his demon crew.

"When you have your trap ready to spring, notify me, for I can be communicated with at any time through the General Delivery of the post-office here, addressed as Sister Dolores only.

"An application twice each week will be

made for a letter, and should I desire to communicate with you, I will address you through your sister at her house, either by calling or in writing, and any information of importance I may have to tell you, it shall be promptly given you.

"Should you need money to prosecute your search, and shadowing, you have but to make the request and name the sum, for it shall at once be placed at your disposal, as an engine cannot run without fuel I well know.

"Feeling assured of your success, believe me,

"Yours to command,

"SISTER DOLORES."

Neither New York Nat or Olive spoke for some moments, after the young ferret had finished the revelation of Sister Dolores.

They both seemed busy with their own thoughts.

At last Olive asked:

"What do you make of all this, Nat?"

"That the writer is Mrs. Redmond, that it is her husband who is the culprit, for she says he is married, yet lives as a bachelor, and the coachman's story of his master's life is a mystery in his career."

"I believe you are right; but why should he be playing the part of an old man, and a gambler?"

"As Palos the King of Diamonds he meets many people who play into his power for other work he has on hand.

"I will just see this King of Diamonds and shadow him by night and day, and his record will not long remain unknown to us, and a glorious thing it will be for the Boy Police if we down the Destroyers of Deadman's Den."

"Indeed it will, and the chief of the Secret Service will more than ever consider you the Wizard of Mystery, Nat," was Olive's rejoinder, and she felt proud of her brother as the Mysterious Unknown Ferret who was making such a name for himself as the king of detectives, young as he was in years.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### NAT'S FERRETS UNDER ORDERS.

THE special meeting called for that night, following the day when New York Nat had received the revelation of crime from Sister Dolores of the deeds of the Destroyer, was held in the old rookery surrounded by its extensive grounds all overgrown with foliage, underbrush and weeds, and which was shunned by all as the Haunted House of Miser Max, all save the daring young ferret chief and the bold spirits he held sway over.

Nat had begun to feel a strong attachment for the old place, for he saw nothing to dread there in its memories and shadows, in spite of the tragic scene he had been an actor in there, when he had found Olive under the guardianship of the old Miser Max.\*

New York Nat had remained at the cottage to supper, for he intended to take Olive over to the meeting with him, and the two had been the first arrivals.

Olive also held no dread of the old place, and they scaled the wall and glided along through the evergreen walks until they came to the cellar-door in the rear of the old mansion.

Behind the place, and looking weird and ghastly in the dim light, were the tombs in the deserted graveyard adjoining the property.

The door was opened by Nat, Olive holding the supper brought for the huge and savage dog, the sole guardian of the place, and entering the cellar a lantern was lighted and left burning, the two making their way to the floor above.

The dog greeted them in the cellar, for he was given the run of the house, and he trot-

\* See preceding stories of New York Nat, Numbers 839, 865 and 871 HALF DIME LIBRARY.



ted along close at their heels, for he knew that he had not been forgotten.

Up to the assembly room they went, a large interior chamber on the top floor, and where there were seats, a table, and behind it two chairs.

When Nat had lighted a lamp in the assembly room, standing upon the table, it was seen that Olive wore a black robe, and cap, and that her face was securely masked, for New York Nat was determined that she should not be known by any member of the Boy League, their Queen though she was.

She dropped into one of the seats at the table, and took out of a bag she carried, several leather-covered books, a pen and ink, while Nat went to his room to give the dog his supper.

Just as he returned the movements of the dog showed that some one was coming, and leaving his supper untouched, but without even a growl, the savage-looking animal trotted down-stairs.

He soon returned accompanied by two of the Boy Police, whom Nat greeted pleasantly and whom they saluted politely as they walked on into the assembly room.

Again, before the dog could touch his supper he heard a sound that caused him to trot down to the cellar and return with another of the band.

Thus it went on until he had escorted to the assembly room all of the band, giving no growl, simply acting like the guardian he was to see that no stranger came to the meeting.

When Nat returned to the assembly room he found the Boy Police all there, a lively, bright-looking lot of fellows, and occupying the seats facing the table at which Olive sat.

They had all greeted her with marked courtesy, upon entering, and been welcomed by name and with a pleasant word to each one.

As Nat entered and walked to his seat by the side of Olive, the band of voices ceased and all rose to their feet.

Taking up a mallet that lay upon the table he gave three raps and said:

"The meeting is called to order."

Then, in a few words he told them that he had made a discovery of importance, in fact, was on the track of a large band of crooks who held underground meetings, one each week, were led by a daring chief, and their deeds of guilt consisted in robbery, burglary, blackmailing, body-snatching, and when necessary of murder.

It was to down this criminal band that the meeting had been called, and he was in possession of particulars sufficient to enable them to greatly aid them in their work.

"There is fame in the work for us, and much money besides," he added, "and I have already covered up the work, and will give each one of you your duty to perform in the shadowing as soon as circumstances demand."

He did not speak of Sister Dolores, or how he got his information, and after talking the matter over quietly, he learned that a number of men, known as Poles, the old King of Diamonds.

Some of them, however, regarded him as other than he appeared, a gray-haired old gambler who was a foreigner.

"He is neither gray-haired, nor a foreigner," said Nat.

"He is the game we are after, the one to be run to earth, and upon his being tracked to doom depends the capture of his band."

"On Friday nights, from ten o'clock to one, I wish you all to be on duty first in the lower part of the city, the streets of which I have on a list here for you."

"I wish you to note the going and coming of men toward any given point, and as there are a number of them, they should readily be tracked to their den."

"If the streets watched this Friday night

reveal nothing, we will take another locality, and shadow it, for the Den of the Destroyers must be found."

After a few more special orders the meeting adjourned, all stealing away like ghosts, in the darkness, and Nat escorting Olive to her home.

## CHAPTER XX.

### NAT'S LUCK.

THOUGH Olive had said she was by no means afraid to go home alone, Nat would not hear of her doing so, and accompanied her to the cottage, as has been said.

Then he returned to his gloomy abode and turned in for the night.

He awoke in time to go to the cottage for breakfast, after which he had a talk on the river bank with Olive, and then went downtown.

Just as he got off of the car he heard his name called, and turning quickly, saw Teaser.

Contrary to the universal belief that messenger-boys move at a snail's pace, Teaser was moving rapidly, and a glance at his face revealed to Nat that he had news for him.

"Well, Teaser, I was just going to see you."

"And I to see you, Cap, for I've got news for you, news which I intended you should know, so I was going to look you up and pay for my time, saying at the office the party detained me."

"It is important, then?"

"You bet it's important."

Just come with me around the corner, then, and see what I have to tell."

They soon reached the place specified, and Teaser said:

"You know the handsome cove who was at the theater?"

"The one in the box with the lady."

"That's him."

"What of him?"

"He came to the office half an hour ago and wrote a letter."

"I knew him at a glance, and he worried and studied over the letter for a long time, though it was only a short one."

"He then called for a messenger, and I paid the boy whose time it was to go next, and took his place."

"You did well."

"I then saw a man pass the door of the office and start to come in, but the gent gave him a signal and he went away."

"Then the gent gives me a dollar and says in a low tone that none in the office could hear:

"Take this to the address on this envelope and ask to see the lady herself."

"Don't give it to any servants, and when she reads it she will give you an answer."

"Come to this address, and he handed me this card, and you'll find me there at two o'clock for her answer."

"I will pay you for your second errand then."

"With this he gave me the letter and the dollar and walked out quick."

"I went a second better than him and I saw him join the man outside who had peeped at the door, and I knew the fellow."

"Who was he?"

"He was dressed up like a gent, but Blow pointed him out to me one day in a tight tussle and said he was known as Captain Jerry and was one of the worst scamps that hung about the wharves, and he was sure he was a smuggler or river pirate, as he owned a mighty fast craft fitted up like a yacht, and took parties out on pleasure cruises, but Blow said that was only a blind, for he was a bad one."

"And the gentleman joined this Captain Jerry?"

"He did."

"You are not mistaken in either man?"

"You bet I ain't."

"Teaser."

"Yes, Cap'n Nat."

"Come with me to that big clothing store on Broadway, where they keep messenger-boy uniforms, and I'll buy one, for I'll take that letter, and after a short while you can return to your office."

"When it is time to go and keep the appointment with the gentleman, come out and wait for me here."

"I'll do it, but I haven't told you all yet."

"Ah! what else is there to tell?"

"Smart as that gent may be, he had he forgot to seal that letter to the lady."

"You do not mean it?"

"I do, and more, I just read it before I saw you."

"Here it is and also the card."

Nat glanced first at the card and read:

"RAY REDMOND,

"Bachelor's Building,

"No. 100 —th Avenue."

Then he took the letter and saw it was addressed to:

"MRS. RUBY REDMOND,"

at the same address which he had before shadowed.

"I don't like to do a sneak act, and yet I think I am justified, Teaser, in reading this, for a detective cannot be over particular."

"You read it, for if you don't I think you'll make a big mistake," was Teaser's answer.

With this New York Nat took the letter from the unsealed envelope, and read:

"My Dear Home—

"I have a little treat in store for you, but it must be a secret, not even known to that gossip of a maid of yours."

"I have to run up the Sound to-night in a friend's yacht to visit a gentleman on Long Island and wish you to join me, for there will be no one else save the crew, and we will have supper aboard."

"Go at six o'clock this afternoon to the pier at the foot of Seventy —th street West, and a boat will be there to take you off to the yacht."

"Show Captain Jerry this letter and he will welcome you, and get away before others who wish to go arrive, and whom we would not find pleasant companions."

"Don't fail me, and answer by the messenger."

"I will join you on the yacht at a point down the river where Captain Jerry will land for me."

"Again I say don't fail, for I need your aid and advice in the business that carries me up the coast."

"We will return by rail to-night as you will need to carry nothing with you."

"Yours,

"R. R."

"What do you think, Nat, for to me it looks like a game against the pretty lady after what you told me."

"It is just that, Teaser, and I am in great luck thanks to you, for I'll be the messenger boy that carries this."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE MESSENGER-BOY.

MRS. RUBY REDMOND was certainly a very beautiful woman, as she sat in her luxurious sitting-room in a morning wrapper, a novel in her hand, yet her eyes not upon the pages.

Presently her maid came in to say that a messenger was there with a letter which he would deliver to her alone.

"Show him in, I say, and then please go and buy me a copy of Sunday's Herald, if you have to go to the office after it."

Her voice was low and sweet, her manner



most kind, and having shown the messenger in, Lucy departed upon her errand.

The messenger entered, a fine-looking youth, in a new uniform, wearing spectacles and having a red wig.

It was New York Nat, and having purchased a messenger's outfit he put it on in the store, left his clothes to be called for, and then sought a place where he could don his red wig and spectacles.

"Mrs. Redmond, a gentleman came to the office and gave me this letter to bring to you, saying I must deliver it into your hands and take him your reply at an address he gave me."

Mrs. Redmond no more than glanced at the messenger, who however on his part was most intently regarding her, and taking the letter she said quickly:

"Why is it not sealed?"

"It is just as the gentleman left it, Mrs. Redmond."

She slowly read the letter, her face changing into sudden interest, and when she had read it she bit her lip and was silent for a moment.

Then she said:

"Tell the gentleman that I will go with him."

"Will you not write an answer, please m'am?"

"Yes," and she arose and went to her desk, a pretty inlaid piece of furniture, and hastily wrote a few lines, saying with a smile:

"I will not be so forgetful, but seal my letter."

"It would have been wiser had Mr. Redmond done so, madam," came the startling response of the messenger.

Mrs. Redmond looked at him with surprise, her eyes slightly flashed as though impatient, but she asked coldly:

"What do you mean?"

"I read the letter, Mrs. Redmond."

"How dare you do such a thing?" she said her face flushing with anger.

"I did so in the discharge of my duty and your orders, Mrs. Redmond."

"Your duty, and my orders?" and the beautiful face was flushed now with anger.

"Yes, madam."

"What do you consider your duty, and what were my orders, may I ask, for surely you are laboring under a very great mistake, sir."

"My duty was to shadow Mr. Ray Redmond, as I had such orders from Mrs. Redmond when she came to me as Sister Dolores."

Mrs. Redmond started and her face became deadly pale, while in a hoarse whisper she said, as she dropped into a chair, as though unnerved by a severe shock:

"You are New York Nat and you have tracked me?"

"As you tracked me, Mrs. Redmond, to discover me as you did."

"Why did you do this?"

"To discover who it was that I was serving, Mrs. Redmond."

"I thought I had utterly thrown you off my track, should you follow me?"

"Do you remember riding down in the car with a young fellow who looked like a student, and waited on the corner near you?"

"Yes."

"That was your ferret, Mrs. Redmond."

"I cannot believe it."

"I saw you go into the Catholic Institute, and supposed you were really a nun; but I saw you at the theater that night with Mr. Ray Redmond, and—"

"How did you recognize me?"

"By your rings, which I saw on your hands as Sister Dolores."

"Ah! I never noticed until afterward that I wore them then, and hoped you had not observed them."

"You have keen eyes indeed to recognize me in the disguise."

"I did, and put one of my boys on your track, and he shadowed you to your home here."

"I came to the alley in the rear, pretending to be looking for an advertised horse, saw your coachman, got him to buy a horse and buggy for me, and by liberal fees got considerable information from him, which was innocently given."

"I saw your turnout and the livery of your coachman, and recognized it waiting for you around the corner at the cathedral."

"You are a wonder, New York Nat."

"Thank you, Mrs. Redmond, I am glad you are pleased with your young detective."

"I certainly am, and to track me but shows your magic skill as a shadower."

"I called a meeting of my band, after reading your letter, and put them to work to find out the haunt of the Destroyers."

"I met one of my boys, who is a messenger, and who shadowed you from the theater that night, and he told me he had just been given a letter by the gentleman who was your escort, to carry to you, and he spoke of how long it took him to write it and that he seemed nervous and worried, while he was in company with a very bad man."

"I at once decided to be the messenger, so purchased this uniform, put on my wig and spectacles, which I always carry with me, and brought the letter to you, for we had read it carefully and decided that there was a game in it against you."

"Do you believe that?" was the quick question as Mrs. Redmond sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing.

"You can be the best judge, Mrs. Redmond as to that, and if so I am prepared to thwart it," was the cool reply of New York Nat.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE FERRET'S RUSE.

MRS. REDMOND gazed upon New York Nat with undisguised admiration.

She saw that she had indeed a Wizard at Secret Service work to aid her, and she said:

"I need not deny to you that I am the one you knew as Sister Dolores."

"I was educated in a convent, and would to Heaven I had become a nun; but instead I married and my life has been a sad one and a wicked one, for I have plotted revenge only of late."

"I went into that institution where I have friends among the Sisters, to throw you off my track should you follow me."

"It did no good, clever as I deemed myself."

"You were far cleverer than I."

"Now you say that I can tell best if there is what you term a game against me."

"Yes, madam."

"I am now sure that there is."

"I did not see through this letter when I read it, and so decided to go."

"I do now, so shall decline."

"Oh, no, accept, please, only do not go."

"Why should I accept and then not go?"

"I will go in your stead."

"You?"

"A youth?"

"I'll not go as a young man, Mrs. Redmond, but as a lady."

Mrs. Redmond shook her head and Nat continued:

"You don't know what a fine looking girl I make, and I have assumed feminine disguises until I am perfectly at home in them."

"My plan is to go and have my sister Olive rig me out as a girl, and the letter says show it to the captain and he will know you by it."

"Now he does not know you and I will go as well."

"But my husband?"

"The letter says he will join you further down the river, but I do not believe he so intends, and that he does mean to leave you to the mercy of that yacht's skipper, who is known as a bad man generally and is suspected of being a river pirate and smuggler."

"Ah!"

"I will go as Mrs. Redmond, and I will lay my plans to have others near when wanted."

"When he attempts to carry out his orders from his master, I will be prepared for him, and more, my comrades will be near to come to my aid."

"But can you arrange all this?"

"Without a hitch, madam, as you will see."

"You will risk your life?"

"I do that so often it is growing monotonous, but have no fear."

"I will lay all my plans, then go and rig up as Mrs. Redmond, and come by for you to have a look at me."

"Then I will go to the pier named and board the yacht and see what the result will be."

"I can but trust you, and will."

"That I may give you further proof of it, I will tell you that I am Mr. Redmond's wife, and yet not acknowledged by him before the world as such, for he plays the part of a bachelor in public."

"And is Palos the King of Diamonds, and goes under several other aliases?"

"How do you know this?"

"I am guessing now; but I have the trap laid to find out all."

"And you will find out what I do not know."

"He does not believe that I know him as the King of Diamonds, or as the Master of Life of the Destroyers."

"I have been my own detective and have found out who he is; but I could not track the Destroyers to their Den."

"Mr. Redmond pretends to be much away from New York; but he has been deceiving me, for he is here all the time, and more, is living in bachelor quarters, for I tracked him there."

"What grievance I have against him I will tell you at another time, as also my motives for revenge, and how just they are."

"But what motive has he for wishing to get rid of you?"

"For one reason, he gets the fortune I brought him, and again, he is a money getter by whatever means he can."

"Also, there is a beauty and an heiress here, a lovely girl, with a very large fortune in her own right, whom he is anxious to marry."

"Though married?"

"He will get rid of me first, and I believe, when he weds her, will have fortune enough to give up his evil life and play gentleman."

"I understand his motive now in wishing you to go with Captain Jerry, for that man would do any deed for gold, and is doubtless a member of the band of Destroyers."

"Mr. Redmond is known to him, but will not let the three or four men of the yacht's crew see him, and telling you to take that letter to the skipper, shows that he wishes it out of the way."

"Once Jerry has done his work, Mr. Redmond would see that he, knowing him, did not live long, and thus no suspicion would ever fall upon him."

"You argue well, New York Nat, and all is in your hands," and the beautiful woman held out her hand and grasped that of the young ferret most warmly.

Ten minutes after, Nat took his leave with her answer.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## SETTING THE TRAP.

NEW YORK NAT first went to the house of Walter Vanderlip, after leaving the evidence of Mrs. Redmond, and asked to see Mr. Sherman Canfield.

That gentleman was at home, and greeted the Ferret Captain most cordially.

Then Nat sat down and read him the letter of Sister Dolores.

Next he told him of the special meeting of the Boy Police the night before, and that they had been put to work on the hunt for the Destroyers.

Giving Sherman Canfield time to think over what he had told him, he next made known his shadowing work, in tracking Mr. and Mrs. Redmond, ending by his showing the letter given him by Teaser, and how he had gone to see the lady who he was sure was to become a victim of her wicked and merciless husband.

Mr. Canfield listened with deepest attention to all, complimented the youth upon his splendid work and having heard Nat's plot said:

"Now how can I serve you, Nat?"

"I will tell you just how you can, sir, and I know that you will, while to do so you will have to make the acquaintance of half a dozen or more of my boys."

"I am more than willing to do so."

Then Nat unfolded his plans fully, and leaving his brave ally he went to the store where he had left his clothes, got them, and then sent one of his boys on a message to the office for Teaser, as it was yet a couple of hours to the time he was to meet him.

Teaser came promptly and Nat said:

"I am sailing high, Teaser, and matters are coming just as we want them."

"You are to go to your office and pay up time for the rest of the day, saying you are going out of town."

"Yes."

"Then get Blow, Keno, Chub, Parson, Doc, Flip and Slim, and tell them to meet you at the pier at the foot of West Thirty-fourth street at four."

"When you have done this go to this address and ask for Mr. Sherman Canfield, and he will accompany you to the pier, and all of you are to obey his instructions."

"We will, you bet."

"He is our Arizona ally's friend, and acting for him."

"I understand."

"And you, Cap'n Nat?"

"I am going to deliver the answer to Mr. Redmond."

"You saw the lady?"

"Oh, yes, and all goes well."

"When I have delivered the letter I have other work to do, but will see you later, for Mr. Sherman Canfield knows where to find me."

"I'll bet you are working things prime, flying high, Cap'n Nat," said Teaser with a laugh, and Nat rejoined:

"I hope I am not flying too high, Teaser; but you must be off now, and have the boys dress well, and don't you wear your uniform; but all go with your guns."

"And dogs—a shooting party, I see," and Teaser was off with the words:

"We'll be there, you bet."

Nat then looked at his watch and saw that it was noon.

He went to another District Messenger office, where he was a stranger, and wrote a note to Olive.

Getting a messenger he landed him the note and the bundle, gave him a liberal fee, and sent him to the cottage with the remark:

"I c'u'dn't be spared for so long from me office to carry 'em, cully, so you gits ther duat the gent gives for ther job."

The messenger-boy seemed pleased with his supposed pal's work and departed, while Nat went to lunch and then leisurely saunt-

ered to Bachelors' Building with the note for Ray Redmond.

The janitor told him that Mr. Redmond had just come in, and ushered him into a very handsome suit of bachelor apartments.

There he found Ray Redmond pacing the floor of his cozy library, his face pale and brow dark.

"A messenger for you, sir," and the janitor disappeared.

"The boy you gave the letter to this morning, sir, had his day off, so I took his place," said Nat, handing over the letter.

"It's all the same so long as I get it," was the sharp reply, and he broke open the envelope and read the note, Nat closely watching his face the while.

The expression that swept over the face of the handsome man was one of fiendish delight, and unmindful of Nat he said through his shut teeth:

"That settles it, and I win a double game."

"Here boy," and he tossed Nat a five dollar bill.

"I haven't the change, sir, but—"

"Keep all over the charge for yourself, for I can afford to be generous."

Nat was profuse in his thanks and departed, meeting Captain Jerry at the door as he went out.

"I will go now again to Mrs. Redmond's, and then to the cottage, for I have a double game to win," he said in stern tone as he hurried away, and adding:

"That man is a devil indeed."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## A BOLD VENTURE.

NEW YORK NAT made his call upon Mrs. Redmond.

Lucy the maid had returned, and at once admitted him to the sitting-room, and the young ferret told Mrs. Redmond that all was going well, but in case her husband might watch to see her go to keep the appointment, he would return there in a carriage, and he asked for a bonnet and a wrap known to Mr. Redmond, that he might put them on.

They were willingly given him, and then he departed with all back for the Elevated Road and three quarters of an hour after was at the cottage. Olive had received his note and was prepared for him, with all of his feminine garb laid out ready for him to put on.

He soon robed himself, and calling Olive in she put on a wig of beautiful hair, and painted his face until he looked like a very handsome young lady.

Mrs. Redmond's wrap was a loose one, so was a good fit, and her bonnet was most becoming to him.

When he was all ready he departed, accompanied by Olive, whom Mrs. Redmond had requested him to bring back with him and leave with her.

They reached Mrs. Redmond's house on time, having taken a carriage as they left the Elevated cars, and were at once ushered into the cozy sitting-room.

Mrs. Redmond was utterly amazed when she beheld Nat, and said with enthusiasm:

"You are simply perfectly disguised."

In a few minutes Nat departed, leaving Olive with Mrs. Redmond, and the beautiful young Ferret Queen's composed manner and perfect confidence in her brother caused the poor wife of an evil man to feel sure of the success of the Boy Police under their chief.

Nat was veiled, though not too closely, so that his handsome face could be seen, and when he reached the square next to the pier, he halted the coachman, paid him liberally, and to throw him off his guard, ascended the steps of a residence and ringing the bell asked for a person who did not live there.

Then seeing that the cab was out of sight he went on to the place of rendezvous.

It was an unfrequented pier, and off in the

river lay a small but pretty craft that looked like a yacht.

At the pier was a boat with a sailor in it, while near stood a man whom he at once recognized as Captain Jerry, and a most evil face he had.

With a rough attempt at politeness he stepped forward and asked:

"Was you s'archin' for any one, miss?"

"Yes, for a gentleman by the name of Captain Jerry."

"I'm ther one yer want."

"What might your name be?"

"Mrs. Redmond, and I have a letter I will give you later, if you wish."

"I guess it's all safe."

"Just get into the boat, ma'm, and go aboard, for we has a fairly fair breeze, and your husband will join us later."

Nat stepped gracefully into the boat, glanced at the oarsman and decided that he too was a villain, and five minutes after was on the schooner.

She was fairly well furnished and had a crew of three men besides the captain.

Nat wished to sit on deck, but the captain told her it would be best to go below, and then through a bull's-eye in the cabin she saw Captain Jerry and his crew talking earnestly together in a low tone.

The anchor was then gotten up, sail set and the yacht stood swiftly away down the river.

Nat remained in the cabin, but he had removed his veil and there was a stern look of determination upon his face.

Down past the Battery went the yacht, instead of turning into the East River, and Nat smiled grimly as he muttered:

"I have made no mistake, but Captain Jerry has."

Swiftly gliding by Bay Ridge, then Fort Lafayette, through the Narrows, the yacht sped on at a ten-knot pace, and entered the lower bay.

Then Nat looked out of the cabin and said:

"I thought you were going up the Sound?"

"We are coming back that way."

"Where are you to pick up Mr. Redmond?"

"See here, my lady, it hain't for you to ask questions, for I is obeyin' orders, and I is paid big money to do it."

"Ah, what do you mean?"

"I means that you is in somebody's way and has got ter git out of it."

"What?"

"I talks English, and you understands."

"I is paid big money to have a funeral in your family."

"My God! would you kill me, a woman?"

"What's the difference, man, woman or child—a life's a life, only some is more valuable than others."

"Have you no conscience?"

"I loves gold more than I fears conscience."

"Ah! I am glad to hear you say that, for I am rich, and I will double the price you are paid, if you will spare my life."

"Will you do this?"

"Does yer mean it?"

"I do, and if you refuse, I will appeal to your crew."

"Lord, they is in it with me ter kill yer, or rather drop you overboard, drown yer, then take yer back and leave yer in a dock, where yer body will be found."

"I will pay you double what Mr. Redmond offers to get rid of me, for my riches are what he wants."

"How did you know it was Mr. Redmond?"

"I feel that it is as he sent me aboard here."

"Well, I gits ten thousand fer this job."

"And I will give you twenty thousand to spare me."

"It's a go," was the emphatic response of Captain Jerry.



## CHAPTER XXV.

## NAT CALLS A HALT.

NAT expressed the deepest gratitude at the response of the assassin, accepting the offer made, and then Captain Jerry said:

"It's got to be this way."

"Well?"

"You is to remain on board this craft."

"Yes."

"I'll put back to the city to-night late, and then go and tell the boss it is done and get my money."

"Then I am coming back to have you show up the life-money you offers, and when I gets it I'll have enough to skip out and leave the boss for you to deal with."

"Then you get his money and mine?"

"Of course, I gets it from both ends."

"I do not care, so long as you spare me," and just as the sun was setting Nat suddenly stepped out on deck.

"Come, you must go below."

"I feel very faint, and must have some fresh air for a few minutes," and Nat took out his handkerchief, shook out its folds and pressed it to his face.

"Curse that tug, it seems to be watchin' us," growled Captain Jerry, referring to a tug which had been slowly gaining on the schooner for half an hour past, and was now but a short distance astern.

"You are right, captain dear, it is watchin' us—"

"Hands up, quick!" and Nat's voice was no longer soft and pleading, as he had disguised it, but stern, sharp and determined.

Furthermore, he suddenly leveled a revolver straight at the head of Captain Jerry, while he shouted:

"Come alongside, Mr. Canfield, and bag the game!"

The astounded and frightened crook let go the wheel and stood glaring at Nat, white as a sheet, while the schooner swept up into the wind and lay to, just as the tug ran up alongside, and Sherman Canfield and his contingent of Boy Police sprung on board, revolvers in hand.

"Hands up, all, or there'll be deadly work done here!" shouted Sherman Canfield, and the crew of three men asked for mercy, while Captain Jerry, with a savage oath, whipped out his knife and cried:

"I'll cut your heart out, woman, for this work," for he still believed New York Nat to be a young woman.

"No," was the disguised New York Nat's cool response, and he threw his revolver forward just in time and pulled the trigger.

With a wild shriek the would-be assassin staggered backward and fell into the sea, sinking at once out of sight and forever.

The Boy Police were already upon the crew and had them ironed, while coming aft Sherman Canfield grasped Nat's hand and cried:

"Well done, Nat! but you have cheated the gallows of one of its brightest ornaments."

"But the crew of the tug?" whispered Nat.

"All of them Boy Police, for I chartered the tug without a crew, as Blow is a fair engineer, Slim was on a pilot-boat, and two more of the boys were fishermen."

"They have no license of course, but we'll get back before that is discovered, so no one knows of the affair outside of your own band."

"Good!"

"But what a charming woman you make, only you carry a deadly hand for crooks, Nat."

"That has to be in our rough work, Mr. Canfield; but no vessel is near, so we have attracted no attention, and, as the men are in irons let us return, for I wish to get out of petticoats."

"All right; but who'll sail the schooner back?"

"I will, and you lead the way."

"I will anchor off the same pier, and you can run to the wharf with the tug, and then write a telegram to the chief of the Secret Service and I'll have it sent at once, while you wait in charge of the vessels and prisoners until his arrival, please, and make your report, for we Boy Police will have to make ourselves scarce."

"Yes, I know."

"And I am to tell the chief that his Unknown Ferrets did the work?"

"If you please, sir, and he is to keep the prisoners to themselves, and await further developments, which will soon happen."

"All right, Nat, and I would not have missed this for a year's pay," said Sherman Canfield.

The tug was soon pointed back to New York, the yacht following with the wind abeam, and by midnight the Secret Service chief was on board with half a dozen of his men, and he was hearing the story of the intended kidnapping and murder of a woman from Sherman Canfield, who however would give no names, but promised soon to report fully to the chief, who said:

"Well, I am content to wait, for my Wizard of Mystery will report all in good time."

Having told the chief to return the tug, after the time of charter was up, Sherman Canfield went to the house of Walter Vanderlip and went to sleep deeply impressed with the cleverness of New York Nat and his Boy Police as ferrets.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## PREPARED TO DIE.

WHEN New York Nat left the schooner with his boys, they scattered in various directions, while he went to the home of Mrs. Redmond.

He was admitted by Lucy, who said the ladies were in the sitting-room up-stairs.

In a few words he told Mrs. Redmond and Olive all, and said in a disgusted tone:

"Of course it could not be done without my having to kill some one; but then he sprung upon me with his knife."

"I would not think of it as other than a duty, Nat," was Mrs. Redmond's response, and then she continued:

"As we are nearing the end now, I will tell you something of my life."

"My father left a large fortune when he died, leaving it in equal parts to my mother, my sister who was seven years my senior and myself."

"I was adopted by an uncle in the South, and lived a great deal of my life in Mexico, so I knew only that my mother had died and my sister had married."

"When, several years after, I met a gentleman whom I fell in love with I little dreamed that it was the man who had married my sister, for he then bore not the same name."

"He left me, and we were engaged, and several months after I heard of my sister's death, and that I was the heir to her fortune, and my mother's."

"The property was left in safe hands for me, and a year following I married the man I loved."

"He brought me to New York, and I soon found that I was forced to live a lie, but he told me if his marriage was known to his father, he would be cut off without a dollar, and that an invalid, his father would not live long."

"I believed him, until one day I felt a doubt of him, and began to shadow him."

"I soon found out all that he was, and going to his bachelor rooms with a false key, I went over his trunks there, and, to my horror, discovered everything."

"I found out that he was my sister's husband, that he had murdered her and my mother, poisoning them, and that I had

been made his victim, and was to be put aside as they were, that he might get my money and then marry another."

"I also found out that he was even worse, a gambler, and the leader of crooks of the vilest kind."

"In my horror I fled from his house, and hardly knowing where I went, sought some place to hide."

"I came upon your old Haunted House, and I went there, opening the door with the skeleton keys I had bought."

"Your dog made friends with me, and going over the house, I came upon the room where your League meets, and there found the whole history of your band in the Register upon the table."

"In your room I found your diary, and—"

"Yes, clever as we deem ourselves, see how we are mistaken, for I left those books on the table, never dreaming the house would be entered; but my diary I forgot to hide after writing in it," said Nat.

"Well, I read the whole story, and so it came upon me to seek you and to get revenge through your band."

"The moment I had decided upon this, I went back to my home, leaving all as I had found it, and playing the hypocrite to Ray Redmond, I began my plot, and you are so nobly and well carrying it out for me, for now I am determined that he shall hang for his crimes."

"Now you have my whole story."

"And you have our deepest sympathy and good will, for I see that Olive has been told all," said Nat.

"Yes, she knows all, and it is in your hands now to track Ray Redmond to doom, only let it not be until you place the scene of his Deadman's Den, that you may get his band as well."

"I will see that they are run down, for already have my untiring ferrets given me information that I am sure will enable us to track the Destroyers to their Den," answered Nat, and he added:

"I pledge my word you shall have your revenge, and the Master of Life and his Destroyers shall be shadowed to doom."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## CONCLUSION.

THE pledge New York Nat made to the unfortunate wife of a murderer and crook he faithfully kept, aided by his ally Sherman Canfield and his Boy Police.

The ferrets on duty Friday night felt sure of their game, and so reported to their young chief.

Then New York Nat acted, and with Sherman Canfield, Teaser and Keno, went to the bachelor home of Ray Redmond.

He was at home, preparing to go to the meeting of the Destroyers, and looked up with surprise as the party entered, for Nat had gotten the janitor away and entered with a false key.

"Mr. Redmond, alias Palos King of Diamonds and Master of Life of the Destroyers, we want you," said New York Nat, leveling a revolver upon the man, while the others did the same.

Snow is not whiter than he turned, but perfectly cool he replied:

"Gentlemen, you have downed me."

"I am shocked of course, so let me brace up with this glass of brandy."

He placed his hand upon the glass of brandy on the table, and only the quick eye of New York Nat saw him pass something into it from a little bottle he seemed to slip out of his coat sleeve.

Nat made a spring to check him, but the brandy was dashed off, and with a mocking laugh the man said:

"I was not born to be hanged, gentlemen, so have taken a poison that will kill me within ten minutes."



And it did, while the next day the papers contained a notice of Mr. Ray Redmond being found dead in his room by his own hand, and a letter by his side stating that he was tired of life, had been living a double existence and was already a married man, and his wife's address was given.

After Sherman Canfield's consultation with the chief of the Secret Service this story had been given out, as it was thought best for all concerned, and so Mrs. Ruby Redmond took charge of the body and effects of the suicide, and settling up her affairs left New York, it was said for Mexico, but not until she had given to the Boy Police League a very handsome sum of money for their most valuable services.

And the Destroyers?

That same night of their chief's death, a raid was made by the police and detectives, guided by Sherman Canfield, who had learned the locality of Deadman's Den from New York Nat, and the raid had resulted in the arrest of a couple of score of the worst crooks that ever disgraced a city, though most of them escaped through an underground secret way.

Still the death-blow was given to the band, and the rewards were placed to the credit of the "Unknown Ferrets" by the chief of the Secret Service, who was still kept in ignorance of who the Wizard of Mystery and his allies were, and yet, through Sherman Canfield, continued to receive again and again, proof of their great skill as Ferrets of the Metropolis.

THE END.

NEXT HALF-DIME LIBRARY, No. 884!

The mystery of the Dead Detective's Double and the Baffling Secret of "the Tigress" on the Trail, viz:

## Farrel Fox and His Girl Ferret;

OR, THE

## BOGUS BANKER'S DIVE-SHARKS.

A Story of Three New York Detectives.

BY DAN DUNNING,  
OF THE SECRET SERVICE CORPS.

The noted Central Office Special, Farrel, the Fox, and his comrade Bull, are, in this 'leaf from life,' avengers; for the

### Terrible Detective Trio,

Fox, McVeigh and Bull, is a thing of history—"Mac" having been sandbagged, and dying with a half-revelation on his lips of the assassin and his confederates.

Fox and Bull catch at the faintest of clues but only to drop into

### The Most Desperate Tangle

of their lives—to fight, in the dark, with an unknown but relentless enemy and to be startled by the

### Dead-Alive McVeigh's

apparent reappearance and work.

What it all meant, even the shrewdest reader cannot fathom until the wonderful transformation scene of the end makes it evident that the work is one of the

Star Stories of the Year!

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- 289 Jolly Jim's Job; or, The Young Detective.
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- 670 Norway Nels, the Big Boy Mountaineer.
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- 823 Poker Jack, the Detective Sport.

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- 537 Old Buckeye, the Sierra Shadow.
- 564 Powder Phil, the Boy Miner; or, The Man Without a Past.
- 609 Holly Darrit, the Veteran Detective.
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- 755 Gold Dust Dan's Outfit; or, Reckless Roy, the Regulator.

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- 394 Yreka Jim of Yuba Dam.
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- 272 Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; or, The Rival Heirs.
- 309 A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-Taker.
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- 320 Little Quick-Shot; or, The Dead Face of Daggersville.
- 358 First-Come Fred, the Secret of Slab City.
- 378 Nabob Ned; or, The Secret of Slab City.
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- 708 Broadway Billy's Brand.
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- 507 The Royal Middy's Luck; or, The Hunter Midship.
- 511 The Royal Middy's Fee.
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- 474 Wizard Will's Parrot; or, Flare, the Flower Girl.
- 488 Wizard Will's Last Case; or, The Ferret's Abduct.
- 429 Duncan Dare, the Boy Refugee.
- 432 Duncan Dare's Plot; or, A Cable Boy's Luck.
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- 441 Duncan Dare's Secret; or, The Great Fire.
- 402 Isador, the Young Conspirator; or, The Fatal La.
- 407 Isador's Double Chase; or, The Boy Inherent.
- 412 Isador's War-Cloud Cruise; or, The Wild Yacht.
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- 222 Hoon Bill's Clue; or, Grit, the Bravo Sport.
- 204 Dead Shot Dandy's Dilemma.
- 308 Dead Shot Dandy's Doublet; or, Ker's Kid.
- 314 Dead Shot Dandy's Defiance; or, The Boy Boy.
- 607 Dead Shot Dandy's Chiff; or, The River Detect.
- 245 Merle Monte's Leap for Life.
- 250 Merle Monte's Mutiny; or, Brandt, the Buccaneer.
- 264 Merle Monte's Treasure Island.
- 269 Merle Monte the Condemned.
- 276 Merle Monte's Cruise; or, "The Gold Ship" Ch.
- 280 Merle Monte's Fate; or, The Pirate's Pride.
- 284 Merle Monte's Pledge; or, The Sea Marauder.
- 197 The Kid Glove Sport; or, Little Grit, the Wild B.
- 204 The Kid Glove Sport's Doom; or, Buffalo B.
- Pony Express Rider.
- 867 Dead Shot Ralph's Drop.
- 825 Mario, the Cowboy Conster.
- 781 Ruth Redmond, the Girl Shadower.
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- 617 Ralph, the Dead-Shot Scout.
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- 845 The Indian Pilot; or, The Search for Florida Isla.
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- 827 Billy Blue-Eyes, of the Rio Grande.
- 327 Lone Star, the Cowboy Captain.
- 329 Crimson Kate, the Girl Trapper, The Cowboy's.
- 116 The Hussar Captain; or, The Hermit of Hall Ga.
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